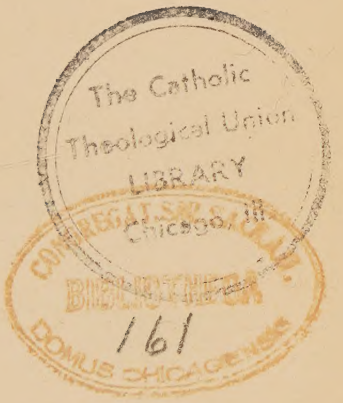
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GREAT FRENCH SERMONS

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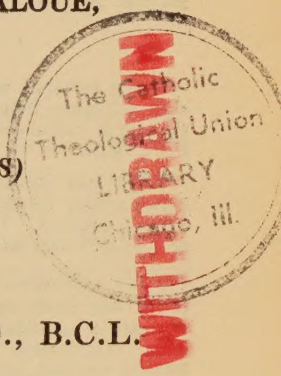
GREAT FRENCH SERMONS

FROM BOSSUET, BOURDALOUE, AND MASSILLON

(SECOND SERIES)



EDITED BY THE
REV. D. O'MAHONY, B.D., B.C.L.

"I spoke of Thy testimonies before kings, and was not confounded. I meditated also on Thy commandments, which I have loved" (Ps. cxviii).

"This is eternal life, to know Thee Who art the only true God, and Jesus Christ Whom Thou hast sent" (John xvii. 3).

SANDS & CO.
LONDON AND EDINBURGH

B. HERDER BOOK COMPANY
ST LOUIS, MO.

Already Published.

GREAT FRENCH SERMONS. From Bossuet, Bourdaloue, and Massillon. *First Series.* Edited by the Rev. D. O'Mahony, B.D., B.C.L. With an Introduction by the Right Rev. Dom F. Cabrol, O.S.B., Abbot of Farnborough. London and Edinburgh: Sands & Co. Price 6/- net.

" The sermons are put into excellent English, and there is no sign of their being a translation from a foreign tongue. The volume is calculated to do much good."—MGR. D. CANON KELLER, P.P., V.G.

" We can cordially re-echo all that Dom Cabrol says in his introduction to this translation of some of the masterpieces of French oratory. To have these sermons in a readable translation is a gain."—*Catholic Book Notes.*

" We welcome these nineteen sermons. They are abbreviated, for it has been said that the modern Englishman does not care whether a preacher be high, low or broad, but he must not be long. They have also been castigated of their courtly regalism, which, however, was so characteristic of Gallicanism of the great period and had nothing of worldliness in it. To modern British taste the French pulpit seems a little florid. But no one can doubt its impassioned sincerity or be blind to the directness of its Gospel appeal, pointing to Jesus Christ only and Him crucified."—*The Church Times.*

" Those who wish to hear the Great French Preachers' message, and to whom the original French is closed, will be grateful to Father O'Mahony for his painstaking effort. He has been on the whole very successful. His task was a difficult one. He has done well to abridge and condense."—*The Tablet.*

"It is good to have Bossuet's great tributes to Our Lady, Bourdaloue's deeply philosophical, eloquently clear expositions of great truths, Massillon's probing of the heart of the hearer. The translation is faithful, and even catches wonderfully the spirit of the originals. It is possible to hope that, since we move in cycles, we may get back some of the ' esprit,' the ' grand style,' that has left our oratory, and left it a dull and dead thing."—*The Catholic Times.*

" These classic gems of pulpit oratory will certainly be warmly welcomed by American and English lovers of this exalted kind of literature. These sermons will not only be very useful, but they will also be a great source of delight to their readers in English." —*The Homiletic Monthly.*

PREFACE

THE favourable reception accorded to our selection from the sermons of the great French preachers that was published two years ago, has impelled us to issue this Second Series of their sermons. The discourses in the preceding volume were chiefly ones for Lent.

The present collection comprises principally translations from Bossuet. So far as we are aware, no other English version of these sermons of his has ever been available to the public. In making our selection of Bossuet's sermons, we have been guided mainly by the subject-matter; we have chosen one or two popular familiar discourses of his as well as several of his more elaborate sermons for great occasions. Except for the curtailment of a few of the lengthy exordiums, and the occasional omission elsewhere of an unimportant paragraph, his sermons here are given without condensation or abridgment. Under the title "Uplifting of the Soul," are appended some sections of Bossuet's singularly beautiful *Elévations sur les Mystères.* Those "Elevations" (than which, according to the French non-Catholic historian Henri Martin, there is nothing more elevated among the monuments of the Christian mind) are not sermons or addresses; they are, like his "Meditations on the Gospel," written reflections destined by the author

for a community of nuns. Anyone (wrote La Harpe) that has not read the *Elévations* and the *Méditations* does not really know Bossuet. An English version of a portion of the *Méditations*, by Miss F. M. Capes, was published in 1900 by Longmans & Co. With the exception of a few very meagre extracts by an anonymous translator that were issued in 1850, no English translation of the *Elévations* has been given to the public.

A few of our translations from Bourdaloue and Massillon have been adapted from old ones now out of print. Owing to the great length of most of their sermons in the original French, many of these here presented appear in a retrenched form or in a synopsis. In Massillon's discourse on the Divinity of Christ we have left out the first part, which deals with prophecy and miracles as a proof of His Divinity. One of Bourdaloue's sermons on the Resurrection has been translated specially for these pages, and is given practically in full, only one or two paragraphs being omitted from the peroration.

Though Massillon is more commonplace and less eloquent than Bossuet or Bourdaloue, English translations of his sermons have been circulated among the general public more extensively than the translations of the sermons of either of his predecessors. The English version of thirty-two sermons of Massillon's, that recently formed two volumes of the popular "Ancient and Modern Library of Theological Literature," was produced by a non-Catholic, William Dickson, in 1803, and has been reprinted several times. In 1830 Rutton Morris—who, too, was a Protestant—translated into English fourteen of Massillon's sermons. Neither Dickson's nor Morris's

translation, however, is remarkable for literary merit; and there are a few misleading notes added by Morris in his work. The sixty-five short sermons from Massillon, by a Catholic priest, the Rev. Edward Peach, which were published in London in 1807 and have since been reissued in Dublin more than once, are but rough and diluted adaptations from the French originals.* The good translation of Massillon's Ecclesiastical Conferences and Pastoral Letters (Dublin, 1825) by the Rev. C. H. Boylan, of Maynooth College, deserves special mention. There have also been Dr. Dodd's translation of Massillon's Sermons to the Great, and the Rev. T. St. John's version of Massillon's Charges to the Clergy, both these translations being now quite forgotten.

Bourdaloue's sermons have been less neglected than Bossuet's by the translators. An English version (which is in rather poor English) of thirty-one of Bourdaloue's sermons, by the Rev. A. Carroll, S.J., was issued in London in 1776, and has gone through two or three Dublin editions. An excellent translation of eight sermons from Bourdaloue for Holy Week and Easter, by the Rev. G. F. Crowther, M.A., an Anglican clergyman, appeared successfully in 1884; and another parson, the Rev. C. Hyde Brooke, more recently has included in his readable translations from the great French preachers some other sermons of Bourdaloue's. But it is a pity that Mr. Brooke 'has given a preface of a Protestant and anti-

*In connection with Massillon's sermon on the Small Number of the Saved, it is advisable to consult the book by N. Walsh, S.J., on *The Comparative Number of the Saved and the Lost*, 4th edition (Dublin, 1908), pp. 16-21. Monsabré, too, has vehemently condemned the exaggerated tone of this sermon of Massillon's. But, doubtless, its excessive severity was intended rather for dramatic effect than for doctrinal exaggeration.

Catholic character, which must render his work quite unacceptable to Catholics.' In the recent book entitled "The Irish College in Paris," Father P. Boyle, C.M., supplies a translation of the charity sermon (*2e Exhortation sur la charité envers un séminaire*) preached at Paris by Bourdaloue in aid of the Irish Seminary; else we would have added that sermon in this present collection.

It is interesting to note that Bossuet, unlike Bourdaloue and Massillon, did not learn by heart and recite his sermons, though for the greater part of his public life he was accustomed, before delivering a sermon, to write it with minute care both as to matter and form; nearly all his manuscript sermons are to be regarded rather as his preparation for preaching than as being his sermons as he actually preached them.* His funeral orations, if more elaborated, were not more an object of his care than were his sermons.

There is exaggeration in many English writers' unqualified condemnation of Bossuet's and Bourdaloue's elaborate eulogy of Louis XIV.† Bossuet himself warned the Dauphin that such eulogy could contain irony. There is much truth (as well as some finesse) in Goethe's maxim that if you would improve a man it is no bad thing to let him suppose that you already think him that which you would have him to be. Anyhow, in his court sermons Bourdaloue was most

*Cf. A. Rébelliau, *Bossuet*, pp. 23-24; A. Rébelliau's *Oraisons Funèbres de Bossuet*, pp. xvi-xvii; and F. Brunetière, *Bossuet* (Paris, 1912), chap. i.

†Cf. G. Lanson, *Bossuet*, chap. v.; H. L. Sidney Lear, *Bossuet and his Contemporaries*, chap. ii.; F. Castets, *Bourdaloue;* and A. Feugère, *Bourdaloue*, pp. 474-500. See also Rev. J. N. Figgis, *The Divine Right of Kings* (Cambridge, 1913); and Joseph Rickaby, S.J., *Political and Moral Essays* (New York, 1902).

uncompromising in his denunciations of vice; and, as the *Times Literary Supplement* (Aug. 10, 1916) urges, "if Bossuet could not refrain from uttering now and again those phrases of empty compliment which were the current coin of Versailles, he was not afraid, no man ever less, to sound aloud in its reluctant ears that awful note of transience and vanity and doom which cannot but have angered as well as appalled the gaudy butterflies who were fluttering away their lives in the saloons and gardens of the Roi Soleil." Bossuet's oratorical pronouncements on the nature of the civil authority of the king can well be interpreted to mean nothing more than what St. Paul teaches (Rom. xiii. 1-7); nor did they involve acceptance of the then exploded theory of 'the divine right of kings.' Louis XIV. himself (as Mr. J. E. C. Bodley notes) perpetually made light of that doctrine of divine right.

De Quincey's maladroit remarks on the rhetoric of the French pulpit orators must be ascribed to his defective mentality; Brunetière testifies to the justness of Vinet's acknowledgment of the depth and reach of the philosophy of Bossuet's eloquence, and to the unsurpassed energy and majesty of his language. The modernity of Bossuet forms the subject of one of Brunetière's lectures. It is to be hoped that the lectures on Bossuet that were delivered at Oxford in 1914 by the late Rev. Dr. J. N. Figgis may yet be published. The Rev. Principal A. E. Garvie's forthcoming book, *The Christian Preacher* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark), will, we believe, have a chapter devoted to the great French preachers.

Our former volume of "Great French Sermons" has an introduction from the pen of the Right Rev.

Dom F. Cabrol, O.S.B., Abbot of Farnborough. In his striking introduction the Abbot defines the characteristics of the preaching of each of the three French preachers. He places Bossuet first in rank, with Bourdaloue and Massillon very far behind.

D. O'M.

St. Edmund's, Southampton.

BOSSUET

" I have said, and I repeat it, that among so many elegant writers of the 17th century Bossuet alone was eloquent."—VOLTAIRE.

" Who does not admire the vast range, the magnificence, the enthusiasm, the genius of Bossuet? He is more majestic and sublime than any of the Romans or the Greeks."—VAUVENARGUES.

" Bossuet is a writer who, so far as eloquence and language are concerned, has always been considered as one of first that his country has produced."—F. VON SCHLEGEL.

" Of all men Bossuet comprehends most clearly and most entirely the world of moral, political, civil, and religious doctrines, looking at them from the most exalted or central point of view."—SAINTE-BEUVE.

" Bossuet sees in the Bible living science, palpitating and flaming speech; he shrouds himself in it and becomes imbued with it. He sweeps along worlds of ideas and images as in sport, and hurls down, with a precipitancy like the flight of the storm, the heavy masses of his discourses. Demosthenes and Cicero were equalled by Bossuet, equalled as to genius, surpassed as to sublimity of tone and subject."—HENRI MARTIN.

" Bossuet is the greatest orator that has ever appeared in the Christian pulpit—greater than Chrysostom and greater than Augustine; the only man whose name can be compared in eloquence to those of Cicero and Demosthenes. There is nothing, in French, that surpasses a fine page of Bossuet."—F. BRUNETIÈRE.

" None of our English divines has anything approaching the monumental greatness of Bossuet. Bossuet was Liddon's avowed master and model whose sermons he learnt by heart when training himself for the pulpit."—*The Times Literary Supplement.*

" For all his false steps in the dismal quarrel with Fénelon, Bossuet may still remain to us by far the greatest Churchman modern Europe has produced."—VISCOUNT ST. CYRES.

BOURDALOUE

" How many different styles have we admired in preachers before we had experience of that of Bourdaloue, who has attained perhaps the highest perfection of which our language is capable in that species of eloquence."—FÉNELON.

" Bourdaloue was one of the first to make reason speak in the pulpit, and always eloquently."—VOLTAIRE.

" Bourdaloue's success was one of the most brilliant that human speech has ever achieved."—D. NISARD.

" We see in Father Bourdaloue a holy and venerable personage, one of those men of whom all Protestants, considering themselves simply as Christians, ought to be proud."—A. VINET.

" Bourdaloue convinces rather than commands; and by convincing he persuades; for his discourses tend always to some duty, to something that is to be done or avoided. The public did justice to Bourdaloue, as they always do to a solid and impressive style of preaching."—HALLAM.

" Logic, reason, wisdom and piety dwelt in the soul of Bourdaloue, and flowed copiously from his lips."—FATHER PROUT.

" Bourdaloue has not the unction, the elevation, the pathos of some of his contemporaries. But he is a master of statement. He is not led away into mere rhetoric, poetry, or conceit, but he grips his thought fast till he has hammered it into his hearer's head."—BISHOP J. C. HEDLEY, O.S.B.

" Bourdaloue does not dazzle or startle a reader; he does what is better—he nourishes."—EDWARD DOWDEN.

" Bourdaloue seemed not only to forget himself, but to ignore himself completely, and to be but the impersonal mouthpiece of the Church."—E. FAGUET.

" Bourdaloue's preaching has been the best reply the Jesuits ever made to the *Provincial Letters* of Pascal."—M. GUSTAVE LANSON.

" Bourdaloue's high personal character, his simplicity of life, his clear, direct and logical utterance as an accomplished orator, united to make him ' the preacher of kings and the king of preachers.' "—G. KLEISER.

MASSILLON

" Those who believed not Massillon's doctrines have at least acknowledged his talents; he has been called the Racine of the pulpit and the Cicero of France."—LA HARPE.

" Massillon discovers much knowledge both of the world and of the human heart. He is pathetic and persuasive; and upon the whole, is perhaps the most eloquent sermon-writer of modern times."—REV. DR. H. BLAIR.

" Amongst the great French preachers Massillon reigns supreme in the possession of the quality of unction, that sweet, pious and affectionate effusion of a heart that is full of God, which makes its way, without violence or uproar, into the soul of the hearer."—REV. T. J. POTTER.

" Massillon's style is pure, nervous, and goes straight to the heart; his manly courage adds to it a conviction which we shall seek in vain in the words of men not thoroughly genuine and straightforward."—H. VAN LAUN.

" Between Newman and the great French school there is this difference—that they are orators, and he is as far as anything can be in a great preacher from an orator."—DEAN R. W. CHURCH.

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CORRIGENDUM.

Page 338, line 10, *read* "separate him from," *instead of* "take from him."

GREAT FRENCH SERMONS

I

THE EXALTATION OF THE CROSS

By Bossuet.

"God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Gal. vi. 14).

The glory of the Christian must of necessity coincide with the glory of God, since the Christian finds nothing worthy of his ambition and courage, save the things divine, the things immortal. Now, the glory of God consists in two things: His absolute power and His infinite mercy; for, to be glorious demands greatness and also a display of that greatness. If this display is not the outcome of solid greatness it is a feeble glimmer, a mere will-of-the-wisp; and if the greatness is obscured it cannot shine with that pure brilliant lustre without which it is impossible for glory to subsist. Therefore, I say that the glory of God is in His power and in His mercy. His power renders Him majestic in Himself; His mercy makes Him magnificent in His generosity towards us. By His power He stores up vast, boundless hoards of riches and precious things in the treasury of His Divine Being. But it is His mercy which unlocks that treasury and lavishes its wealth upon His creatures. Or, to use another figure, power is

the source, the fountain-head of the great river; mercy the channel along which its waters flow. Power provides what mercy distributes; and it is from the mingling of the two that there comes that Divine splendour which we call the glory of God.

Now, it is in the Cross that the power and the mercy of God are most signally displayed; and this is why St. Paul, who says that *the whole Gospel is summed up in the Cross,* calls that Gospel *the strength and the power of God* (1 Cor. i. 17-18). More than this, he preaches no other thing to us than that *the Cross reconciles us with God and secures to us His pardoning mercy through our Lord Jesus Christ* (Eph. iii. 15-18; Col. i. 20). Therefore, it is true that the Cross is the glory of Christians; and when I shall have shown you in the Passion and Death of our Divine Master these two transcendent attributes of power and mercy, I shall be able to say, with the great Apostle: *God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of Jesus!* This is the subject on which I now ask you to meditate. Let us look together upon the two arms of the Cross of our adorable Saviour: in the one I see an infinite treasure of power, in the other a vast, inexhaustible well-spring of mercy and forgiveness.*

O Jesus, our Saviour and God! inspire us now so that we may worthily celebrate the glory of Thy Cross. And you, O *redeemed people* (1 Pet. ii. 9), whom the Precious Blood of Jesus your King has delivered from eternal slavery, contemplate with the deepest reverence and attention the wonders of the triumphant Death of your unconquerable Deliverer.

*It is interesting to compare this present sermon of Bossuet's with Bourdaloue's sermon on the Passion from the text 1 Cor. i. 22-24.

Let us, with His Divine aid, glorify His Almighty power in the Exaltation of His Cross.

The Power of God

If you contemplate our Lord Jesus Christ abandoned to the fury of His executioners and rendering up His soul in the midst of incredible torments, do not for one moment imagine that He is reduced to this extremity by weakness or infirmity. No; it is not the severity of His sufferings which brings about His Death, He dies because it is His will to die; He leaves the world (says St. Augustine) without coercion on the part of others, because He entered it of His own will. Death in mortals is the result of a failure, a giving way of natural forces; death in Jesus Christ is an outcome, an effect of supernatural power. This is why He Himself, speaking of His Death, says: *I have power to lay down My life, and I have power to take it up again* (John x. 18); from which words you see clearly that He puts His Death and His Resurrection on one and the same plane, and that He glories no less in His power to die than in His power to rise again.

And, indeed, must there not have been in our Divine Lord Himself an infallible preservative against death, since by His word alone He restored to life bodies already beginning to decay, already touched by corruption? Think of the Widow of Naim's son stretched on his bier, of the little daughter of the Ruler of the Synagogue lifeless on her bed, of Lazarus four days dead and with the taint of the grave upon him; did not all these experience the power of that vivifying voice? He, then, Who could thus restore

life to others could assuredly most easily preserve it for Himself. It would be absolutely useless for you to attempt to dry up mighty rivers or fountains of living water; as fast as you drew from them, so fast would the inexhaustible source from which they flowed replenish them, enriching them continually with fresh and copious streams: and thus it was with our Divine Saviour. He had within Himself the fount of Life Eternal, a spring of living water so abundant that it could never be exhausted. Do your worst, executioners, strike blows as heavy as you please, make a thousand wounds as deep and as cruel as you will in the adorable Body of my Saviour, hoping that as the Precious Blood pours from those ghastly wounds, the very life of the Divine Victim will ebb away with it. It is all in vain. The source of life is deep, deep down within Him, you cannot reach it, you cannot exhaust it or dry it up; it will flow on, and it will never cease to flow unless His own power restrains its course. Yet what your hatred cannot do His Love will do for our salvation. He Who rules and orders at His pleasure both health and sickness, He Himself will command life to withdraw for a time from His own Divine Body. It is not His will that any necessity of nature should have a share in His Death, because He reserves all the glory of it for the infinite Love which he bears to men. Thus you see that our Master died by the exercise of His own Divine power, and not from weakness.

St. John the Evangelist also calls our attention to a most important fact, namely, that our Saviour when hanging on the Cross reviewed in thought all that had been written of Him in Prophecy, and seeing that nothing more remained for Him to do but to

taste the bitter cup which the Psalmist had foretold should be given to Him, He asked for something to drink: *I thirst.* He cried out thus, *that all things might be fulfilled* (John xix. 28). Then, after having just tasted the gall and vinegar which were offered to Him, He Himself declared that all was consummated, that He had fulfilled in every minutest point the will of His Eternal Father; and finally, seeing nothing more that could keep Him any longer in this poor world of ours, lifting His voice with a loud and piercing cry He rendered up His Divine soul to God. Everything in this dying scene on Calvary was so calm, so free, so premeditated, that it was not difficult to judge that no man had deprived Him of life, but that He had given it Himself of His own free, uncontrolled will. Of this He had already assured us: *No man taketh My life away from Me, but I lay it down of Myself* (John x. 18).

O glory! O power of the Crucified! Whom else have we ever seen fall asleep so exactly when he willed as Jesus died exactly when it pleased Him to die? What man, intending to start on a journey, fixes the hour of his departure so precisely as our Divine Lord fixed the hour of His decease? Therefore it was that the centurion who had orders to keep guard upon the Cross, considering the calmness, the deliberation even of this death, and hearing the great cry with which the Saviour of the world drew His last breath, marvelling to see so much strength in this extremity of weakness, was filled with awe and conviction, and exclaimed loudly, so that all bystanders could hear: *Truly, this man is the Son of God!* Yes, this centurion who thought nothing of the living Saviour, recognised so much power in His death that

it forced from him this confession of our Lord's Divinity.

Shall I now, to the glory of the Cross of Jesus, remind you how the death which He suffered upon that Cross moved heaven and earth, darkening sun and moon, disturbing the course of the elements, making all the forces of nature tremble in apprehension of a return of the disorder and dread confusion of chaos? I might indeed remind you of all this, if it were not my desire to dwell upon far greater things. The Cross of Jesus has done more than reverse and lead captive the forces of nature. It has conquered the powers of darkness, Satan and his myriad host; it has brought down to the dust the pride and arrogance of men; it has proved their so-called wisdom to be mere folly and ignorance; it has triumphed over their hard and perverse hearts. To have gained such a victory I consider to be a far more glorious conquest than to have upset the course of the universe, because I can see nothing in all that universe more stubborn, more proud, more indomitable than the heart of man. It is this conquest which seems to me to display most wonderfully the power of the Cross, and I think that you will presently form the same opinion.

Power is most fully displayed in victory, especially when that victory is gained over proud and daring enemies. Now, this God Who is so infinitely good and merciful, under Whose dominion all creatures would be happy if they were submissive; this great eternal God has always had among those creatures rebels and enemies, because some have always been ungrateful and insolent. It was necessary that those rebels should be conquered; but why conquer them

by the Cross? This is the miracle of Almighty power, this is the great mystery of Christianity. Let us, under the guidance of the Holy Scriptures, penetrate into the depths of these adorable truths.

Let me tell you that the greatest enemy of God, the one most intolerable to Him, the one in most direct opposition to His greatness and His supreme sovereignty, is Pride. And how is this? It is because a proud man would, if he could, be master of everything; he really believes that all things are his due; his custom is to attribute everything to himself; and thus he makes himself his own god, shaking off the yoke of sovereign authority. This is why Satan, having raised himself by his extraordinary pride to great apparent eminence, declared (as the Scriptures tell us) that he would *ascend above the height of the clouds and be like the Most High* (Is. xiv. 14): and God Himself often declares that He is *a jealous God* (Exod. xxxiv. 14) Who cannot endure the proud; that He will drive away the haughty and the high-minded from before His face, because they set themselves up as His rivals and would make themselves equal to Him, the one eternal Almighty God. Thus we see that Pride is undoubtedly the chief of all God's enemies.

Indeed, is it not true that pride has stirred both heaven and earth to rebellion against their Creator? In the beginning, Pride climbed up into Heaven, where the Throne of the Eternal God stands immutable and glorious, and there seduced the angels from their allegiance. It carried thus the torch of rebellion even into the sanctuary of the Most High; then descending upon earth, having already won over to its side this band of fallen angels, it makes use of

them to subjugate men. Lucifer, prince of this rebellious host, still keeping even in the depths of Hell all his original pride and daring, conceives a plan no less terrible than audacious. He resolves to gain a complete mastery over man because God honours and favours him; but, knowing that he cannot succeed in this design so long as men remain subject to their Creator, he first makes them rebels, in order afterwards to make them slaves. To make them rebels, he must first make them proud. He therefore inspires them with that arrogance which possesses him: hence the history of all our woes; hence that long train of evils which afflict our nature, oppressed as it is by the tyranny of the Devil.

Inflated with this success, he openly declares himself the rival of God, he abolishes His worship in all parts of the earth, he sets himself up to be adored by all whom he has led captive by his tyranny. This is why the Son of God calls Satan *the prince of this world* (John xii. 3); and the Apostle, in still more vehement language, calls him *the god of this world* (2 Cor. iv. 4). Thus has Pride armed heaven and earth, striving to pull down the Throne of God. Pride is the father of idolatry; for it is through pride that men, despising lawful authority and full of self-love and self-esteem, have made divinities for themselves on their own pattern. They would have no other gods than these; they deified and adored their own errors and passions. Truly they were worthy to have gods of stone and brass, and to serve inanimate creatures; they who had wearied of the worship of the living God, that God Who had formed them in His own image! Thus all creatures, stirred and agitated by the spirit of pride which was dominating

the whole universe, made war against their Creator with impotent fury.*

Arise, O Lord, and let Thine enemies be scattered; and let them that hate Thee flee from before Thy face! (Ps. lxvii. 1). But, O God, with what weapons wilt Thou arm Thyself to destroy these infuriated hosts? I see neither Thy thunderbolts, nor Thy lightning, nor any tokens of that terrible majesty before which the very mountains melt like wax! I see only a mangled bleeding Body, an infamous and cruel Death, a Cross and a Crown of Thorns. These are Thy sole munitions of war; this is all that Thou dost bring forward to oppose Thine enemies. Yes; so it is, and justly, justly. There is a reason for this; a reason so strong, so firmly grounded, that nothing can shake it. Let us consider it.

To oppose pride by force would be to honour it. Pride must be conquered by absolute weakness. It is not enough that pride should succumb, unless at the same time it is forced to acknowledge its impotence; it must be worsted by the very weapons which it holds in the greatest contempt. O Satan, you rose up against God, armed with your utmost strength; God will descend upon you, armed only with weakness, to show you how He derides and scorns your audacious plans and projects. You desired to be man's god; a Man will be your God: you brought death into the world; death will ruin all your schemes and intentions: you established your empire by making the hearts of men cling fondly and tenaciously to empty honours, uncertain riches, illusive pleasures; contempt, poverty, extremest suffering, in a word, the Cross, will lay waste your

*Cf. Milton, *Paradise Lost*, books i-iii.

empire and sweep it from the face of the earth. Oh, marvellous power of the Cross of Jesus!

The truths of God were banished from the earth, and the darkness of idolatry settled down upon it. It is a singular but certain fact that the most civilised people were those whose forms of religion were the most absurd. They boasted of knowing everything, and yet were so miserable as not to know God! They were marvellously successful in whatever they undertook or attempted to grasp; yet in the matter of religion, the beginning and the end, the sum total of human life, they were positive fools. Who could believe that the Egyptians, the fathers of philosophy; the Greeks, the masters of the fine arts; the Romans, so grave and thoughtful that their strength of mind and of intellect made them dominate the world; who (I say) could have believed that men such as these would have worshipped brute beasts, the elements, inanimate creatures, deifying parricides and the vilest of reprobates; and that not only malignant diseases, but even the most infamous vices and the most brutal passions would have had their temples in Rome?* Who would not be forced to believe and to say that God had given up to the darkness of error those proud and haughty intellects which refused to acknowledge Him; and that, as they had abandoned the true Light, the God of this world had blinded them, so that they might not see what they were and whither they were tending?

Thus the Devil held captive the world and the masters of the world, held them captive and trembling under the yoke of servile religions of which,

*Cf. Döllinger, *The Gentile and the Jew*, English trans. (London, 1862).

however, they were no less jealous than of the greatness and power of their republic. What could be more wicked than their deities? What more superstitious than their sacrifices? What more impure than their profane mysteries? What more cruel than their public games which formed part of their religious worship, games fit only for savage beasts, in which their false deities were gorged and sated with human blood? And yet so many great philosophers, so many lofty intellects who were compelled by the very beauty and completeness of the ordering of the universe to recognise that there could be but one Supreme Being, one God ruling and governing nature and its forces; even these men (I say), revolted as they were by such disorders, could not induce their fellow-men to abandon them!* With all their sublime reasoning, with all their magnificent eloquence,

*Seneca laments the fact of almost daily divorce in Rome in her most cultured period. Juvenal, who lashed the vices and vicious of his day, tells us of one woman who by divorce married eight husbands in five months. Even the 'divine' Plato, the most 'naturally Christian' of the pagan philosophers, advocated a community of wives, and on the ground that the children would then become more exclusively the property of the State. Hymen, the god of marriage, was represented in Roman mythology as the son of Venus, the goddess of impurity, by Bacchus, the god of drunkenness. How degraded was woman, whom God made far purer than man! Such was the world when in the stable of Bethlehem, the birthplace of civilisation, stood a woman."—Archbishop P. J. Ryan.

"When scepticism alleges that our advanced morality (such as it is) is really the work, not of Christianity, but of civilisation, require it to show cause why this advanced morality has never grown up except under the ægis of the Gospel; why the old civilisations were one and all smitten with decay and degenerated in moral tissue even before they lost their intellectual vigour. When you are assured that marriage and the laws of purity are safe, ask how it was that the ancients in these capital respects marched continually downwards, and that only in Christian times and lands have these laws come to and maintained authority."—W. E. Gladstone.

they could not convince the people of the folly and banefulness of their religious ceremonies and orgies, or of the hideous depravity of their beliefs.

But as soon as the Cross of Jesus began to be visible to the eyes of the world, as soon as the Passion and Death of the Son of God began to be preached, the lying oracles were silenced, little by little the false gods were dashed from their pedestals; Jupiter, Mars, Neptune, and the Egyptian Serapis ceased to reign over the hearts or lives of men, and ere long all that had been adored on earth was either forgotten or despised. The world at last opened its eyes to recognise God the Creator, and marvelled at its own blindness and ignorance. The very foolishness of Christianity was more powerful than the most sublime philosophy.* The simplicity of twelve poor fishermen, unaided by patronage or eloquence or art, changed the face of the universe. These fishermen were more successful than even that famous Athenian Timotheus, the son of Conon, of whom Plutarch tells us that Fortune drove whole cities into his net. These twelve fishermen gathered all men into their Divine nets, thus completing the conquest made by Jesus Christ, Who restores all things to His Eternal Father by His Cross.

Yes, by His Cross. For we must remember that

*Christianity has marched for fifteen hundred years at the head of human civilisation, and has driven, harnessed to its chariot as the horses of a triumphal car, the chief intellectual and material forces of the world. Its learning has been the learning of the world, its art the art of the world, its genius the genius of the world, its greatness, glory, grandeur, and majesty have been almost, though not absolutely, all that in these respects the world has had to boast of."—W. E. Gladstone, *Studies on Homer.*

"Certainly the highest and most varied civilisation that men have ever known has not come into being without Christianity."—Dean R. W. Church, *The Gifts of Civilisation.*

while our Divine Lord walked on earth among us, holding daily converse with men, although He worked many wonderful miracles, although the words of eternal life were ever on His lips, yet He had but few followers. Even His friends were often ashamed to find themselves reckoned as the disciples of so despised a Master. But as soon as He had ascended the Hill of Calvary and died upon the Cross, what multitudes of people flocked to Him! O my God! what is this new marvel? Basely used and contemned in life, after death He reigns. His Divine teaching which should have made Him revered and honoured by all, only nailed Him to the Cross; and that Tree of Shame, which, one would think, must have made Him more than ever an object of contempt, on the contrary wins for Him the reverence, nay, the adoration of a whole universe. As soon as He is able to stretch forth His loving arms, a contrite world rushes into their embrace. This mysterious grain of wheat has no sooner fallen into the ground than it is multiplied by its own corruption. He is no sooner lifted up from the earth than (as He had predicted in His Gospel) He *draws all things to Himself* (John xii. 32). Thus He turned the instrument of a shameful, agonized death into a heavenly lever which should raise the hearts of men. The Saviour fell down from the Cross into the Sepulchre, and, by a marvellous counter-stroke of Divine power, the whole world fell down at His feet.

See this concourse of people flocking from all the quarters of the globe to the Cross of Jesus; they are not only glorying to bear His name, but eager to suffer as He suffered, to be despised for His sake, to die for love of Him. If among the ancients any one

despised death, this extraordinary courage was admired as something almost unprecedented. Thanks to the power of the Cross of Jesus, examples of such courage are so common among us that their very number prevents us from recording them. Ever since the Death of a God has been preached, death for us has not only lost its terrors, but has had its delights. Decrepid old age, tender childhood, timid and delicate maidenhood, each and all have hurried to meet it as they might have hurried to join in some triumphal procession or to receive a crown of victory. This is why it was a common saying in those days, that the Christians were an order of men especially destined and chosen out for death. The all-powerful Cross had familiarised them with that hideous phantom, from which nature itself shrinks with horror. The world wearied sooner of inflicting tortures and death, than did the Christians of enduring them. All the devices of cruelty were exhausted in efforts to shake the Faith of our Fathers; all the forces of the world were brought to bear upon their constancy and heroism. Ah! how blind was that fury, which only strengthened and settled what it sought to destroy! It was by the Cross that Jesus our King resolved to conquer the world; this is why He signs with this victorious Cross His brave soldiers, thus making them partakers of His sufferings. By the power of the Cross they will overcome the world; by their patience they will disarm their persecutors; in the end their meekness and gentleness will convert their enemies.

The Cross of Jesus must be adored throughout the world; His empire must have no bounds, because His power has no limit. It will extend its dominion

to the most distant provinces, the most inaccessible islands, the most unknown nations and peoples. What a joy to see Greeks and Barbarians, Scythians and Arabians, the inhabitants of the Indies, the people of the whole world, united together to form a new kingdom, which will have the Gospel for its Law, Jesus for its Head, and the Cross for its Standard! Even Rome, that proud city, for so long a time drunk with the blood of Christian martyrs; Rome, the mistress of the world, will now, by the religion of Jesus, carry her conquests a thousand times further than she ever carried them by her armies, and we shall see her paying more honour to the tomb of a poor fisherman than she ever did to the Temple of her Romulus. And your turn comes too, proud Cæsars! Jesus Crucified desires to see the majesty of the Empire prostrate at His feet. Constantine, that victorious Emperor, at the time appointed by Providence will raise the Standard of the Cross above the Roman Eagles. By the Cross he will overcome tyrants, by the Cross he will give peace and splendour to the Empire, by the Cross he will strengthen his own house; the Cross will be his sole trophy, for he will proclaim to the world that by the powerful aid of this salutary sign he has conquered.

Truly, I can no longer wonder, O Jesus my Lord, that so short a time before Thy death Thou didst declare with so much joy that the hour of Thy triumph was approaching, and that *the prince of this world was soon to be cast out* (John xii. 31). Neither can I wonder any more when I see Thee in the Palace of Herod, and before the Tribunal of Pilate, calm and unmoved, confronting all the pomp of the Royal Court and the majesty of the Romans with the dignity

of Thy marvellous silence. It is because Thou dost feel and know so well that the Day of Thy Crucifixion will be for Thee a day of triumph. And Thou hast triumphed, O Jesus, and hast in Thy triumph led the powers of darkness captive and trembling behind Thy Cross. Thou hast conquered the world (as St. Augustine says) *not by iron but by wood.* For it was worthy of Thy greatness to conquer strength by weakness, and the loftiest things by the meanest, and that which is by that which is not, as says the Apostle (1 Cor. i. 27-28); *and false and haughty wisdom by wise and modest foolishness.* By this means Thou hast made manifest to the world that nothing in Thy hands is weak, and that Thou canst make thunderbolts and instruments of destruction out of whatever it may please Thee to use as such.

But let me remind you of yet another convincing proof, given to us by Jesus Christ, that it was indeed the Cross which worked all those wonders. It was in the reign of Constantine, at the time when the Church was at last permitted to enjoy peace, when the true God was publicly acknowledged everywhere, when all the nations of the world confessed the Divinity of Jesus; the Cross of our dear Master, which until then had never appeared before the eyes of men, was made manifest and acknowledged owing to the extraordinary miracles wrought by it to the glory and ennobling of those days. It was exalted in a magnificent temple, to the glory of the Crucified and the consolation of the faithful. Was it merely owing to a happy combination of circumstances that this happened at that particular time? Could so great an event have occurred without some special mysterious ordering of Providence? No, we may be sure that

it could not. This exaltation of the Cross was decreed that all might bow beneath the yoke of our Divine Saviour. The powers of Hell are confounded; the whole world comes to adore the true God in the Church which is His Temple, and through Jesus Christ Who is His great High Priest.

It is time, O holy Cross, that all men should at last behold you. These miracles have been worked by you! the idols have been shattered by you! you have subdued the people! you have given victory to those valiant soldiers of Jesus Christ who have overcome all things by patience! You, holy Cross, will be signed upon the brow of Kings; you will be the chief ornament in the crown of Emperors; you will be the hope and the glory of Christians, who will say with the Apostle St. Paul that *they desire to glory in nothing, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ*, and all this because the Cross, by the signal victory which it has gained in illuminating the world with so glorious a display of almighty power, has at the same time poured forth upon us from the storehouse of its boundless wealth the treasures of God's infinite mercy.

The Mercy of God.

Truly it is a glorious thing for us to serve a God so powerful as Him Whom we adore; but it is His Mercy which above all else compels us to glory in Him and in Him only. Who would not deem himself most highly, nay, infinitely honoured by the fact that a God so great, so powerful, esteems it His chief glory to enrich us His poor creatures with His wealth? And does not such mercy urge us on more and more

to make it our glory to praise and adore Him? This God, so far above us by His transcendent power, yet in His tender mercy condescends to stoop even to us, and to communicate to us all that He has, all that He is. Let us confess that this fills our hearts with love and grateful wonder, and that if He is glorious in that supreme power which makes us tremble lest His mercy should not be vouchsafed to us, He is no less glorious in the mercy which makes us love His almighty power.

For there is glory in making oneself loved; and this is why Tertullian teaches us that in the beginning God's chief attribute was mercy, and that His one principal desire was to do us good. For this statement the great writer gives a very sufficient reason. He says that in order to find out what is our primary and dominant desire, we must select that which we find to be the most natural, since nature is the moving spring of all the rest. Now, to Almighty God there is nothing more natural than this desire to enrich us with the profusion of His graces. As a spring naturally sends forth its waters, and as the sun naturally sheds its beams abroad, so does God naturally do good. Being in Himself all goodness, and, by His natural dignity, abounding in infinite treasures, He must also of necessity by His very nature be beneficent, generous, magnificent in His dealings with His creatures.

When He punishes you, sinner as you are, the reason for His so doing is not in Himself; it is not His will that any man should perish. It is your malice, your ingratitude, which draws down His indignation upon your head. On the other hand, if we desire that He should do us good, we need not seek

far to find motives which may induce Him to do so; His nature is of itself so beneficent that no other motive is required; in it there is a sufficient reason for the exercise of His benevolence, and one ever present with Him. When He inflicts upon us any pain in punishment, or what we consider to be evil, the cause of the infliction lies in ourselves; when He does us any good, He does it on account of Himself. "That He is kind and merciful to us," says Tertullian, "is the result of His own nature, this goodness is a part of His very being; that He is just is the result of what we ourselves are." It is we who by our crimes furnish material for His just vengeance. It is, then, true to say that Almighty God the Creator could not begin His stupendous work except by pouring forth the treasures of His goodness upon all His creatures, and that the display of mercy is therefore His greatest glory.

And now, I ask you, why was it that Jesus our Saviour, our Love and our Hope, our High Priest, our Advocate, our Intercessor; why was it that He hung upon the Cross and died upon that accursed Tree? What does the great Apostle St. Paul teach us about this? Was it not that He might renew all things in His own Person, that He might bring back to men all their original perfection, restoring in them the image of His Eternal Father, reforming them according to the pattern of the Divine Artificer? This is the teaching of Christianity; and what led our Saviour to wish to die upon the Cross was that His Sacred Heart was stirred by the same tender emotions of pity, kindness, and infinite love as had moved the heart of the Creator when the world, new-born from chaos, left His almighty hands.

Indeed, was it not upon the Cross that Jesus offered before the Throne of God, not the blood of bulls and heifers, but His own Sacred Flesh formed by the Holy Ghost, a holy and living oblation for the expiation of our sins? Was it not on the Cross that He reconciled all things to Himself, purifying our souls indeed by the virtue of His Precious Blood? (Col. i. 20). Men, as we have already said, had rebelled against God, and Divine Justice was therefore ready to lure them down into the pit of destruction, into the company of devils whose counsels they had followed and whose presumption they had imitated, when suddenly our merciful High Priest appeared and stood between God and men. He presented Himself that He might bear the blows which were about to fall upon our heads. Laid upon the Altar of the Cross, He shed His Blood and poured it forth upon men; uplifting His innocent hands to God, He thus *made peace between Heaven and Earth* (Col. i. 20), He arrested the course of Divine Justice, and changed implacable wrath into infinite, undying mercy.

Bold and defiant as the rebel angels, we had sold ourselves body and soul to them; and Almighty God, the witness silent and awful of this terrible bargain, of this accursed contract, had commanded that we should be delivered up into their hands. He had so decreed by a final, irrevocable sentence. But what did our Saviour and Deliverer Jesus then do? St. Paul tells us: *He took the handwriting of the decree that was against us, and fastened it to the Cross* (Col. ii. 14). And why? It was, O Eternal Father, in order that Thou mightest not see the sentence which condemned us, but only the Sacrifice which absolves us, and that if Thou shouldst recall to mem-

ory the sin which incurred Thine anger, Thou shouldst at the same time remember the Precious Blood which appeases that wrath. Thus was fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah: *Your league with death shall be abolished, and your covenant with Hell shall not stand* (Is. xxviii. 18). Jesus broke that accursed compact by means of a better covenant: and from that moment hope dawned for us. Heaven, which was as brass for us, began to pour down its graces upon miserable mortals; Jesus opened its gates to us by His Cross.

This is why I compare it to that mysterious ladder on which the Patriarch Jacob *saw angels ascending and descending* (Gen. xxviii. 12). Are we not taught by this vision as by a figure that the Cross of our Saviour re-opens communication between Heaven and Earth; that by this Cross the Holy Angels come down to us as to their brothers and allies, and at the same time teach us that by this Cross we may mount up to Heaven with them, there to fill the places which their ungrateful comrades left vacant.

In what, then, should we glory but in the Cross of Jesus? *For*, as St. Paul tells us, *if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the Death of His Son, much more now that we have peace with Him through the Blood of the Mediator will He not load us with His blessings? and if when we were sinners Jesus Christ loved us so much as to die for love of us, now that we are justified by His Blood, who can measure the depth of that Divine Love?* (Rom. v. 8-10). Yes, truly, if while we were still rebels God showed us such mercy, what will He not do for us now, when by the Cross of our Saviour we have become His children? *What is there that He Who spared not His own Son can refuse us?* (Rom. viii. 37).

For myself, I can with absolute truth say that this and this alone is my glory, that this is my sole consolation. Were it not for this, into what depths of despair would not the infinity of my sins plunge and engulf me? When I consider the narrowness of the way which God has commanded me to tread, and the incredible difficulty of restraining on a path so slippery a will so volatile and impetuous as mine; when I look down into the almost fathomless depths of the human heart, capable of concealing in its crooked windings and many secret corners such a multitude of corrupt inclinations of which we ourselves are ignorant, I shudder and have too much reason to fear that even in things which appear to me the most innocent there may be sin. And even though I may appear just in the eyes of men, what human standard of justice will keep its ground when brought face to face with Thee, O Eternal God? *And who is he who would be able to justify his life if Thou shouldst call him to a strict account of it?* (Ps. cxlii. 2).If even St. Paul, though he could say with the firmest assurance that he was not conscious of anything amiss in himself, yet added that he feared lest he should not thereby be justified in Thy sight (1 Cor. iv. 4), what shall I (miserable sinner that I am) say, O my God? What must not my troubled conscience dread? Yet, O my merciful High Priest, most faithful, most compassionate, most loving, to Thee I look, and I know that Thou wilt shed calm into my soul. No; as long as I can embrace Thy Cross, I will never lose hope: as long as I can look up to Thee seated at the right hand of Thy Father, clothed in a human nature like my own, bearing on Thy sacred Flesh the scars of those wounds which Thou didst receive for love of

me, so long as I can do this I will never believe that humanity, frail and faulty as it is, can cease to be dear to Thee; and the terror of Thy Majesty shall never hinder me from drawing near to the safe shelter of Thine unfailing mercy. This makes me certain that Thou wilt have pity on my miseries; this is why I glory in the Cross and in that alone, because in the Cross only is my hope.

But is it true that we do indeed glory in the Cross of Jesus? Do not our actions too often give the lie to our words? Must we not rather say that the Cross is to us, as it was to the Gentiles, foolishness? Is it not foolishness to you also who disdain poverty, who cannot brook insults and injuries, who run after worldly pleasure, who shun everything that the Cross represents, forgetting that our Lord Jesus Christ found His life in death, His riches in poverty, His delight in suffering, His glory in ignominy? St. Paul told those who wished to establish justice by the works and ceremonies of the Law that *if justice had been by the Law then Jesus Christ would have died in vain* (Gal. ii. 21). And may I not to-day with even greater reason say that our Divine Lord died upon the Cross in vain, since He died only to make us a people pleasing to God and yet we live lives of so great licence that we almost force unbelievers to blaspheme the holy name by which we are called? In vain did Jesus Christ die upon the Cross that He might overthrow the wisdom of this world, if after His death we continue to lead the same lives, to applaud the same maxims, to find our highest happiness in the same poor fleeting joys. In vain did the Cross cast down and demolish the idols which were scattered all over the world, if we day after day make

new idols for ourselves by our own lawless, uncontrolled passions; if we offer sacrifice not indeed to Bacchus but to intemperance, not to Venus but to lust, not to Plutus but to avarice, not to Mars but to vengeance; immolating to them, not slain beasts, but our own souls filled with the Spirit of God, and *our bodies which are the temples of the living God, and our members which have become the members of Jesus Christ* (1 Cor. vi. 15, 19; Eph. v. 30).

It is then only too certain that the Cross of Jesus is not our glory; for if it were, should we glory as we do in vanities? Why, do you think, does St. Paul not say that he glories in His wisdom, in His power, in His miracles, in His Resurrection? Why does St. Paul say only that he glories in the Death and in the Cross of Jesus Christ? Does he speak without reason? Nay, do you forget how I told you at the very beginning of our meditation that the Cross gathered into itself all the torments, the insults, the things which appear not only the most contemptible but even the most terrible to our reason? This is why St. Paul says that he *glories in nothing save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ*, in order to teach us humility, in order to make us understand that for us Christians there is no glory, except in those things which the world despises.

I ask you to tell me what is the sign of the Christian; is it not the Cross? "Do we not," says St. Augustine, "bless with the Sign of the Cross the water which regenerates us, the Sacrifice which nourishes us, the holy oil which fortifies us?" Have you forgotten that the Cross was imprinted upon your foreheads when you were confirmed by the Holy Ghost? And why your foreheads? Because the

brow is the seat of modesty. Jesus Christ by the Cross wished to harden our brow against that false shame which makes us blush for things which men consider small and mean, but which are great and noble in the eyes of God. How many times have we not blushed at having done well? How often have not the most sacred occupations and duties seemed to us mean and contemptible? The Cross, imprinted on our foreheads, arms us with a noble and dignified effrontery to resist that cowardly, false modesty; it teaches us that the honours of the world are not for us. When magistrates wish to let the public know that certain individuals who had been brought up before them to be tried and have undergone their punishment and are set at liberty, are yet wholly undeserving of any kind of respect and unfit for any honourable employment, they have them branded with some disgraceful mark, which shall always proclaim their vileness. Well, this circumstance suggests a thought to me. Almighty God has imprinted upon our foreheads, upon the noblest and most prominent portion of our body, a mark glorious indeed in His sight but full of ignominy in the eyes of men, in order to make us incapable of receiving any honour upon earth. It is not that in order to be good Christians we must be unworthy of worldly honours, but that the honours of the world are not worthy of us. In the opinion of the world we are infamous, because the world considers that the Cross which is our glory is an epitome of infamy.

And yet, wonderful to say, as though Christianity and the Cross of Jesus were a mere fable, our one ambition is the attainment of this world's glory; Christian humility seems to us a folly. The early

Christians considered that even Emperors were scarcely worthy to share their glorious Faith; but now all things are changed. We, in our day, think that Faith hardly worthy to be professed by the great ones of the earth; our all-engrossing desire is to be applauded, respected, highly honoured by the world; the lowliness, the insignificance of the Cross is, in our eyes, detestable.

But, you say, my very position, my business in life, makes it absolutely necessary that I should make myself respected and treated with proper distinction. If men in authority, magistrates and so forth, are not counted as honourable and given their due respect, consider what disorder, what lawlessness, would result. Yes, that is true, but let me tell you how a Christian should deal with worldly honours. In the first place he must receive them with modesty, knowing full well how vain and empty they are. Then let him accept them for the maintenance of order and justice among his fellow-men, not for the sake of any pomp or display for himself. Let him imitate the Emperor Heraclius, who laid aside his purple and clothed himself as a poor man, that he might carry the Cross of Jesus. Thus should the faithful lay down all their honours before the Cross of our Divine Master; there let them appear as poor, naked, beggars and suppliants. There let them consider that by birth all men are their equals, and that the poor are by the teaching of Christianity even in some sort their superiors. There let them reflect that the honour paid to them is not so paid on account of their own greatness, but to maintain order in the world, such order as could not otherwise exist. Let them remember that this order will soon, however,

pass away; and then a new order of things will arise, in which those will be the greatest who here below lived the holiest lives and who gloried in nothing save in the Cross of Jesus our Saviour and God.

Let us, then, filled with this thought, venerate the Cross; let us, so thinking, so believing, assist at the Holy Sacrifice which is offered in remembrance of the Passion of the Son of God. May our Lord Jesus Christ make us understand how august, how glorious is His Cross, since it alone can display to men the almighty power of God, since it alone can pour down upon them the vast treasures of His infinite mercy, by opening to them the entrance into unending joy.

II

THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

By Bourdaloue

"The angel said to the women: Fear not; you seek Jesus of Nazareth, Who was crucified; He is risen, He is not here. Behold the place where they laid Him" (Mark xvi. 6).

These words are very different from those that we are accustomed to see engraved on the tombstones of men. However great the men over whom we have raised them may have been, however superb these mausoleums erected by human vanity, however elaborate the phraseology of their eulogistic epitaphs, all is summed up in the two narrow words, *Here lies*. This man, so renowned in the world, perhaps a great conqueror, so powerful, so much honoured and exalted, lies here beneath this stone, down in the dust, buried there, hidden from our eyes; and all his power, all his greatness, cannot raise him from this lowly resting-place. But how different with regard to our Divine Lord! Scarcely has earth received Him into her bosom when, on the third day, victorious and dazzling with light, He quits it; so that the holy women who come to the sepulchre eager and sorrowful, seeking Him and not finding Him, and passionately demanding some tidings of Him, learn nothing except that He is risen, that He is not there. This, according to the prophecy of Isaiah, is what makes His grave glorious: *His sepulchre shall be*

glorious. Whilst the glory of the great ones of this world ends in the tomb, it is in the tomb that the glory of this God Incarnate begins. It is there, where weakness reaches its very culminating point, that He displays the perfection of His strength, and even in the very arms of death retakes by His own virtue a blessed and immortal life. What a glorious change! a change which was to strengthen His Church, console and re-assure His Disciples, and serve as a ground of Christian faith and hope; for such are, or ought to be, the effects of our Saviour's Resurrection.

Yes, I repeat that one of the most solid foundations of our faith and hope is the glorious Resurrection of Jesus Christ. In saying this I am only following the teaching of St. Augustine, who in a few words puts the great truth before us; he says: *In this Resurrection we have a miracle and an example.* A great miracle to confirm our faith; *a miracle, that we may believe.* A great example to animate our hope; *an example, that we may hope.* Indeed, it is upon this Resurrection of the Saviour of men that the two most important truths of Christianity are based. One of these is, so to speak, the very foundation of all religion, namely, that Jesus Christ is God; and the other is the principle of the whole morality of the Gospel, namely, that we ourselves shall one day rise again as did Jesus Christ. This is what I want to make clear to you—the miracle of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ as the incontrovertible proof of His Divinity, by means of which He confirms our faith; and the example of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ as the assured pledge and token of our own future resurrection, by means of which He animates our hope.

Christ's Resurrection a proof of His Divinity.

With what deep respect, with what reverent attention should we not listen to St. Paul when he tells us that the glorious mystery of the Resurrection established in the world belief in the Divinity of Jesus Christ: *Who was predestinated the Son of God in power, by the resurrection from the dead* (Rom. i. 4). Thus spoke the Apostle, persuaded, filled, penetrated by this truth. Yes, we adore a Saviour Who was predestinated the Son of God in virtue of His glorious Resurrection. Instead of the word *predestinated*, the Greek and the Syriac text give *manifested* and *declared;* but St. Ambrose reconciles these differences by saying that Jesus Christ Who in His Incarnation was a hidden God, must in His Resurrection, according to the order of His eternal predestination, be a revealed and acknowledged God. I would call your attention to another remarkable proposition laid down by St. Paul in his preaching to the people of Antioch. He says: *We declare to you that the promise which was made to our fathers God hath fulfilled raising up Jesus, as it is written in the second Psalm: Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee* (Acts xiii. 32-33). What does this mean? and of what day is Saint Paul speaking? If it were of that day on which Jesus Christ as Son of God and uncreated Word was begotten of His Father, why does he apply it to the mystery of His Resurrection? and if he understood by it the day on which Jesus Christ as God-Man rose again according to the flesh, why does he make mention of His eternal generation? What connexion is there between the two statements? Ah, replies St. Ambrose, never has the Apostle spoken

with more deliberate, more admirable connection of ideas. And why? Because the Resurrection of Jesus Christ was in fact a second birth for Him, but a birth far happier and far more priceless even than the first, since in being thus as it were born again from the grave He made in His own Person a visible display of that character of the Son of God with which He was clothed. Therefore it is that the Eternal Father in this mystery acknowledges Him as His Son in a special and most emphatic manner: *Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee.* As if He said to Him: "While Thou wert on earth, although most undeniably the Son of God, the world regarded Thee as the Son of Man; but now, when Thou hast triumphed over death and art born again to the life of glory, Thou dost give so unmistakable a token of the Divinity that dwells in Thee, that it can henceforth no longer be questioned; and although I have always been Thy Father in time and in eternity, I will none the less to-day make it a special honour to Myself, distinguishing this glorious day from all the others which have made up Thy life upon earth, and making choice of it for the solemn declaration made for the whole universe to hear and accept: *Thou art My Son, to-day have I begotten Thee.*"

But let us come to the root of the matter; let us see in what sense the Resurrection of Jesus Christ can be rightly said to establish specially belief in His Divinity. For you will no doubt say: Did not the Saviour of the world throughout the course of His mortal life work miracles such as were sufficient to prove His Divinity? The casting out of devils, the restoring of sight to those who had been born blind, the raising to life again of those who had been four

days dead: were not these all tangible and evident proofs of that wholly Divine power which resided in Him? What more could His Resurrection do to confirm this belief? This is the difficult point in the mystery of which I am treating. I say that the revelation of the Divinity of Jesus Christ was especially attached to His Resurrection; *He was predestinated the Son of God by His resurrection from the dead* (Rom. i. 4). And why? For four reasons, or rather for one single reason which resolves itself into four propositions. (1) His Resurrection was the proof which the God-Man had undertaken to give the Jews in order to convince them of His Divinity. (2) This proof was in fact the most natural and most convincing proof of His Divinity that could be given.* (3) Of all the miracles Jesus Christ performed by virtue of His Divinity, none was better attested than that of the Resurrection of His body; of no other miracle of His was there such incontestable evidence. (4) The Resurrection is the one of all His miracles which has been the most powerful factor in the propagation of the Faith and in the establishment of the Gospel, of which Gospel the very sum and substance is to believe in Jesus Christ and to confess His Divinity.

Hence it is that the early Christians, wishing to express in one word the idea they had formed of the Resurrection of the Saviour, were accustomed to call it simply *The Witness;* and so the Emperor Con-

*To a French philosopher who complained that he was unsuccessful in propagating a new religion which he had discovered, and which he fancied to be superior to Christianity, Talleyrand remarked: "Sir, if you would be the successful founder of a new religion, I respectfully suggest to you that you be crucified and rise again on the third day—if you can."

stantine, having built in the restored city of Jerusalem a superb church under the title of *Jesus Christ Risen from the Dead*, gave it the name of *Martyrium*, that is, *The Witness*. And St. Cyril, the Patriarch of that same city, gives this explanation of the name: that this church was dedicated to a mystery which God Himself had chosen to be the solemn witness of the Divinity of His Son. This is what we shall see by taking the four propositions of which I have been speaking and by trying to grasp their full meaning.

In the first place, is it not a very important fact that however often in the Gospels we find Jesus Christ urged by the Jews to give them proof of His Divinity, He never gives them any except His Resurrection; making use of a mysterious figure in order either to convince their minds or to confound their incredulity? "*This faithless generation*, He says, *seeks a sign, and no sign shall be given to it but the sign of Jonas the Prophet*, or rather that sign of which the Prophet Jonas was the figure—namely, that after having been for three days shut up in the bosom of the earth, He will come forth from it as Jonas came forth from the belly of the whale." And again our Lord, addressing Himself to the Pharisees, says: "You ask Me what sign I give you that I have the right to use that absolute power and independent authority which I claim (John ii. 18). I say to you that after you shall have destroyed by a cruel and violent death this visible temple, which is My Body, I will on the third day restore it to the same state in which it now is, yes, and even to a more perfect state." Notice this: our Lord might have pointed to a hundred other miracles which He had worked in the midst of them, but He passes over them all; and one might have

said that in performing them He had no intention of convincing men of His Divinity. For if He changes water into wine at the Marriage Feast at Cana, it is by an almost forced yielding to Mary's prayer; if He casts out a devil from the daughter of the Canaanite woman, it is to escape the importunity of that woman; if He restores to life the widow's son, it is out of pure compassion. In most even of these superhuman actions, after having given free scope to His almighty power, He recommends secrecy to those who had experienced its virtue. And when He unveils to the three Disciples the glory of His Transfiguration (in which the Eternal Father, speaking in His own Person, acknowledges Him as His own Beloved Son), He forbids them to publish abroad any particulars of this marvel until He should be risen from the dead: *Tell the vision to no man, till the Son of Man be risen from the dead* (Matt. xvii. 9). And why? St. Chrysostom tells us the reason. Because, in the designs of Almighty God, the Resurrection of Jesus Christ having been appointed to be the sign of the Divine Sonship, this it was which was to set the seal upon all the other miracles and be their convincing, their consummating proof. In that miracle rested faith in all the rest; for this Saviour of men having said: "I am equal to My Father, and am God as He is God; and to prove this, three days after My death I will rise again," had He not been all that He claimed to be, it would have been impossible that He should rise again, because in that case Almighty God, in consenting to perform the miracle of our Divine Lord's Resurrection, would have sanctioned imposture and falsehood. If then, after that declaration, Christ rose from the dead, it

follows as a natural consequence that He must have been God. He being God, all His other miracles were substantiated, since it is natural for a God to work miracles. And, on the contrary, if He had not risen, belief in His Divinity would have been destroyed by His own mouth; and His Divinity being destroyed, His miracles must lose all their power, His words all their truth, His life would have been nothing but craft and illusion, the Christian Faith a mere phantom. And such is the literal sense of the words of St. Paul: *If Christ be not risen, then vain is our preaching, and your faith also is vain* (1 Cor. xv. 14). And all that, I repeat, because Jesus Christ had marked out the Resurrection of His Body as the distinctive proof of His Divinity.

But why, you may say, did He choose this particular sign in preference to all the others? Ah! this is a strange question to ask; and I in reply would ask you, Could He possibly have chosen one more brilliant in its illuminating power, one more striking and convincing from all points of view, than this raising of Himself from the dead? "A miracle," writes St. Augustine, "is for all intelligent beings the voice and the language of God, and the greatest of all miracles is the resurrection of the dead; but of all resurrections which is the most miraculous?—is it not that of restoring life to oneself and of rising again by one's own power?" It was not, then, without reason that Jesus Christ fixed on this sign as the special proof of His assertion that He was God and the Son of God. In truth, none but a God could say as He did: "*I have power to lay down My life, and I have power to take it up again* (John x. 14); to do the one is no less easy to Me than to do the other;

and as I shall only lay down My life when it pleases Me, so too I shall only resume it at My own good pleasure." I repeat that none but a God could express Himself thus. Before the coming of Jesus Christ, as St. Ambrose reminds us, the world had, it is true, been the witness of more than one dead man restored to life, but in each instance the miracle had been worked by another man. Elisha by breathing upon the corpse of the Shunamite's son re-animated that lifeless body; and by the prayer of Elijah the dead child of the widow of Sarepta was given back to the embrace of his desolate mother. But (as St. Ambrose observes) those who were thus raised from the dead received their life by virtue of a power outside themselves, and those who performed those miracles worked them upon others and not upon themselves. The unheard-of wonder was that one and the same Man should at one and the same time accomplish the twofold miracle of rising from the dead and of raising Himself from the dead. Such a thing as this had truly never yet been heard of; *from the beginning of the world, it hath not been heard* (John ix.), and that is the miracle which God had kept in special reservation for His Divine Son, in order to proclaim to the world that He was at once Man and God: Man, since He was raised to life again; God, since He had raised Himself to life again. Adorable Mystery! which St. Jerome with his wonderful penetration into the meaning of the Scriptures discerns as couched in the language of that Psalm so evidently and so undoubtedly referring to Jesus Christ and to Him alone: *I am counted among them that go down to the pit, I am become as a man without help, free among the dead* (Ps. lxxxvii. 5).

Yes, they have reckoned Me among the dead, and believed that in dying My fate must have been only that of other men; yet between them and Me there are two great points of difference—one that I was *free among the dead;* the other that among the dead I needed not the help of anybody: *a man without help.* What, think you, is the meaning of this? It is that Jesus Christ entered the kingdom of death, not as its subject, but as its Sovereign; not as a captive, but as a Conqueror; not as dependent on its laws, but as enjoying a perfect liberty: *free among the dead.* So that in order to quit this kingdom by Resurrection, He needed no aid but His own, no prophet to pray for Him and command Him with authority to burst the bars of a prison and come forth; no, because being God He was only to be assisted by His own Almighty power. *I am become as a man without help, free among the dead.* Words, St. Jerome adds, which the Holy Ghost seems to have dictated as the epitaph of Jesus Christ Who was to rise from the dead.

It is, then, absolutely true that the Resurrection of this God-Man was the most authentic proof that could possibly be given of His Divinity; and this is the reason that the whole Synagogue, conspiring against Him, made such vigorous efforts to prevent belief in that Resurrection from being accepted by the world. All the Jews were persuaded that if once it were believed and verified that Jesus Christ had risen from the dead, He would from henceforth be in undisputed possession of the rank and title of Messiah and Son of God. But what happened? Owing to the marvellous direction of Providence, there is not one of the articles of our Faith, or rather

not one of the miracles on which our Faith is founded, of which the facts are so well attested or of which the evidence is so incontrovertible as the miracle of the Resurrection. So that, says St. Augustine, even a pagan and an infidel, if without bias he examine into all the circumstances of this miracle, is compelled to acknowledge its truth.* And what is still more astonishing, continues the great Doctor, those two things which would naturally have proved obstacles to belief in this Resurrection—namely, the hatred of the Pharisees and the incredulity of the Disciples—are the very two means employed by God to support and strengthen it. Yes, the most virulent enemies of Jesus Christ contributed, in spite of themselves, by their very hatred, to verify the miracle of the Resurrection of His Body and consequently to establish our Faith. For scarcely had Jesus breathed His last sigh upon the Cross, when they betook themselves to Pilate and made this representation to him: "Sir, we remember that when that seducer was still alive he said, 'after three days I will rise again.' He pledged himself to this publicly before all the people. They are waiting, eagerly expecting the fulfilment of the prediction; and if now his body were to disappear from the tomb, nothing more would be needed to confirm so fatal an error. It is therefore most important that steps should at once be taken in the matter; and we come to you that what is done may be done with the fuller authority." "Go," was Pilate's reply, "you have guards, make use of them as it seems good to you. I give you full powers to act as you judge best." No sooner was this per-

*The facts about Socrates are less attested than the facts about Christ."—ROUSSEAU, *Emile*.

mission given than a strong guard was set around the sepulchre, the stone which closed its opening was sealed, not a single precaution was omitted. And what was the result of all this? Just to remove absolutely the smallest doubts, the very slightest suspicions with regard to the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. For, in spite of all their precautions and all their care, after three days' entombment the Body of the Saviour not being found in the Sepulchre, what could the Pharisees say? That under cover of the night and while the guard was sleeping, His Disciples had borne Him away? But, continues St. Augustine, how could they approach the tomb, raise the stone and carry away the Body without waking one of the soldiers? Besides, if the guard were asleep, from whom did they learn that the Sacred Body had been carried away, and who had done it; and if they were not asleep, how could they allow this to be done? Was it likely that the Disciples, who at this time were the very embodiment of weakness and timidity, would have become suddenly so bold as, in defiance of the guard and at the risk of great personal danger, to dare to violate the seal set by public authority? Moreover, had they ventured to do this, to what purpose would they have wished to make others believe that of which the falsity would have been clearly known to themselves? What could they hope for from that? For, if they had carried away the Body, it was evident to them that Jesus Christ had not risen from the dead, and that He had deceived them; and as for His sake they had exposed themselves to the hatred of their whole nation, it would be natural that, seeing themselves thus deceived, far from still supporting His interests, they would have renounced

Him and declared Him to be an impostor. This testimony the Synagogue would have received with general applause, and it would have gained for these witnesses the favour of all the people, whereas by publishing His Resurrection they were well aware that they exposed themselves to the risk of incurring the severest possible treatment, persecution, imprisonment, scourging, even death.

Yet this was the only loophole through which the Jews tried to escape, in their controversion of the stupendous miracle of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. They said, and they repeated with malignant obstinacy: 'His Disciples carried away his body.' We learn this not only from the Evangelists but also from Justin Martyr, who, having been of the Jewish religion, was better informed than others respecting their traditions. He says that the report was widely circulated that the sepulchre had been broken open and the Body stolen. The falsity of this report was, however, so apparent that the Resurrection of the Saviour soon became an accepted fact among the people. Josephus himself is unable to dispute it, however much it might have been to his interest to obscure the glory of the Son of God. Pilate also, already in heart and conscience a Christian, and well informed as to the truth of the matter, wrote (as Tertullian tells us) to Tiberius about it. And Tertullian does not hesitate to add that the Roman Emperors would forthwith have believed in Jesus Christ if they had not been obliged as Emperors to conform to the views of the age, or if it were possible for them to become Christians and remain Emperors.* What, however, surprises me more than all else, and

*Cf. Rev. Dr. P. J. Healy, *The Valerian Persecution*, chap. i.

the fact which we can never sufficiently admire, is that the Apostles who during their Master's life on earth could not even comprehend Him when He spoke to them of His Resurrection, who at the time of His Passion actually became hopeless, and who after His Death rejected as illusions and fancies what was told to them of His appearances; that these men, I say, so ill-disposed to believe, or rather so determined not to believe, should become the preachers and the witnesses of a Mystery which up to that time had been the subject of their incredulity; that they should confront the tribunals and the judges of the earth to confess a Resurrection which had always been to them a cause of scandal and offence; not fearing even death itself, if by so dying they might confirm the truth of the mystery; counting themselves happy if by such a death they might prove themselves faithful witnesses of Jesus Christ, their glorious and triumphant Lord and Master. What wrought such a change in them? What could do it, except a firm, undoubting belief in His Resurrection? But then what but the Almighty power of God could have changed their obstinate incredulity into such firm, unwavering faith?

It is also in virtue of this faith in so miraculous a Resurrection, that Christianity has grown and spread abroad in the world, that the Gospel has made such almost incredible progress, and that the Divinity of the Saviour, in spite of Hell and all its powers, has been accepted as an article of undying belief, even to the utmost extremities of the universe. We need only consider the origin and infancy of the Church. The Apostles never preached Jesus Christ in the Synagogues without adducing His Resurrection as

an unanswerable proof of the truth of what they preached: *Him God raised up the third day* (Acts x. 40). Again and again they repeated that this was He Who rose on the third day from the dead; Whom the God of our fathers glorified by delivering Him from death; Whom you indeed crucified, but Who appeared to many after His Crucifixion in new life and beauty. One would say that this was the one single article of Faith which made their preaching effective and irresistible. For, how did they display the power of that Apostolic zeal which filled their souls? By bearing witness to the Resurrection of Jesus Christ: *With great power did the Apostles give testimony of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ our Lord* (Acts iv. 33). In that lay the whole aim of their ministry, from that proceeded all its results. So much so, that when it became necessary to choose a new Apostle to fill the vacant place of the perfidious Judas, the predominant consideration on which they laid stress was that he must be one who had been a witness of the Resurrection; *one of these men who have companied with us must be made a witness with us of His Resurrection* (Acts i. 21-22), as if their Apostleship had been reduced to this one single point, and in fact, adds St. Luke, all the world yielded to the force of this testimony. The Jews could not resist it; the Gentiles were persuaded by it; the number of the Christians grew daily; and we learn from St. Chrysostom that directly catechumens had made their profession of faith in the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, Baptism was administered to them. And why? Because to profess the Resurrection of Jesus Christ was to profess that He was God; and to profess that He was God was to embrace His religion,

seeing that the Christian religion is undoubtedly and wholly based upon the Divinity of Jesus Christ, and that the Divinity of Jesus Christ has been unmistakably revealed to us only in the miracle of His Resurrection.

Christ's Resurrection a pledge of ours.

We will now proceed to consider our Divine Lord's Resurrection as a token and pledge of our own resurrection.

St. Augustine tells us that of all the articles of our religion there is none which has been more violently contradicted than that of our future resurrection from the dead, because none has a more powerful influence upon men to keep them in the path of duty and to make them subject to the law of God. For if men are to rise again, there must be another life besides this present one; all our hopes cannot end with death; we must have either a happy or a miserable fate awaiting us in eternity; God must be reserving us either for other rewards or other penalties than those with which we are acquainted in this present condition of things. Our great object must then be to labour here below to merit those rewards and to escape those punishments; to do this must be the aim and motive of every action, all else in fact being a matter of indifference to us. In the light of this truth we must see how much we are to be condemned if we allow ourselves to be troubled by the miseries of this life, or to be dazzled by the splendour of earthly prosperity; virtue alone is, then, our solid, our enduring good in this world. All these consequences result necessarily from our belief in the

resurrection of the dead. This is why Tertullian begins his excellent work on this subject with those magnificent words: "The confidence of Christians is the resurrection of the dead." Whereas, says St. Paul, if we are not destined to rise again, if our hopes are limited to this world's happiness, then are we of all men the most miserable, for all that we do is idle and useless. If there is no resurrection, it is in vain that we expose ourselves to so many dangers, in vain that I fought so desperately for the faith at Ephesus; there is no longer any rule of conduct, any guiding principle that we must follow, we can give the rein to our senses and passions, duty and piety are mere illusion, our present interest and advantage the only motive that need govern us. Oh, beware lest you fall into this fatal error of thinking that we shall not rise again! The Apostle drew all these conclusions by means of a sound theological line of reasoning, the force of which is scarcely understood by the present age, but on which St Chrysostom has thrown new light by reminding us with whom St. Paul had to dispute. It was not with heretics, with whom, as they acknowledge the immortality of the soul while refusing to accept the doctrine of the resurrection of the body, his argument would have been no argument at all; no, he was contending against libertines and atheists, who deny the resurrection of the body because they do not wish to believe in the immortality of the soul or in any future existence. For although these two errors have no absolutely necessary connection, yet they are inseparably united in the opinion of wicked men, who, trying to blot out from their minds every impression and thought of things eternal so that they may be the better able to sin with im-

punity, wish first of all to get rid of belief in the resurrection of the body, and then, making the almost inevitable progress in infidelity, arrive at such a state of blind incredulity as to persuade themselves even that the soul is not immortal. And this is why St. Paul makes use of the same weapons in attacking both these forms of impiety.

However that may be, I repeat that in the Resurrection of Jesus Christ we have an evident and assured pledge of our own; and why? Because in this Resurrection of the Saviour we find at once the principle, the motive, and the model of our own;—the principle by means of which God can raise us from the dead, the motive which induces God to do this, and the model upon which He will form that resurrection. This subject demands our most serious and thoughtful attention.

I say, in the first place, that in the Resurrection of the Son of God we find the principle of our own. Why? Because this miraculous Resurrection is, on the part of Jesus Christ, the effect of a sovereign and almighty power. For if He could by that almighty power raise Himself to life again, why can He not do for others what He has accomplished in His own Person? Such is the unanswerable reasoning of St. Augustine. There are, he says, some who believe in the Resurrection of the Saviour, surrendering their own judgment on this point to the incontrovertible testimony of the Scriptures. But here their faith ends and they fall into a grosser error, not comprehending, or not desiring to comprehend, how it follows necessarily that we ourselves shall one day rise again. Now, continues the great Doctor, Jesus Christ having risen from the dead in the flesh,

flesh like to my own, and having risen by His own power, is not this proof sufficient that I one day shall be able, not to raise myself as He raised Himself, but to be raised by Him? If (as St. Augustine goes on to say) Christ when He came upon earth had, according to the false idea of the Manicheans, only assumed the appearance of a human body, imaginary and unreal; if He had left in the corruption of the grave that flesh formed in Mary's womb, and with which He had been clothed that He might live His life among men; if, when taking back to Himself life, glorious and undying, He had at the same time taken a body quite different from mine, of a more subtile substance, composed of more perfect qualities, then perhaps I might have doubted the possibility of my own resurrection. But to-day, on this Feast of the Resurrection, He is born again, with the same flesh, with the same blood with which He was conceived in the spotless womb of a Virgin Mother; and what reason could I have for not believing that what I see Him to have accomplished in Himself He would also be able to accomplish in me? For is He less powerful in me and for me than He was in Himself and for Himself; and if in each case there is always the same virtue, will it not always be in a condition to work the same miracles?

By the exercise therefore of this supreme power He will go down into the depths of the sea, into the bowels of the earth, He will penetrate into dens and caves, into the darkest, the most solitary, the most secret hiding places of mortality, to gather up and piece together again those poor remains of ourselves which death has scattered to the four winds; and dust and ashes though they be, insensible as it would

seem to sight or sound, this risen Saviour will make them hear His voice and will re-animate, re-vivify this great army of the dead.

Thus did St. Paul understand the miracle of the Resurrection, and speaking to the early Christians he expresses his amazement that any among them, believing as they did that Jesus Christ the Incarnate God rose from the dead, should yet dare to dispute the doctrine of their own future resurrection: *Now, if Christ be preached, that He rose again from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?* (1 Cor. xv. 12). For is not the one consequent upon the other? and will it not be this risen God Who will repair the ruins made by death, Who will restore our bodies to their original form and condition, *Who will reform the body of our lowness?* (Philip. iii. 12). But how will He perform this miracle? Will it be only by the efficacy of His intercession? Will it be only by the virtue of His merits? No, says St. Chrysostom, but the Apostle gives us to understand that it will be by the absolute dominion which the Incarnate God has over all nature, *according to the operation whereby also He is able to subdue all things unto Himself* (Philip. iii. 21).

This was understood even by the Patriarch Job, that man raised up by God 3,000 years before Jesus Christ to speak of Him in terms so strong and so precise and to predict so clearly the Resurrection of the Saviour and our own. *Yes*, he cries, to encourage his own soul, and to sustain himself in his sufferings; *Yes, I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that in the last day I shall rise out of the earth* (Job xix. 25). Notice how closely he connects these two resurrections, that of Jesus Christ and his own. What would

he have said had he lived in our own day, and had he been witness as we are witnesses of that glorious Resurrection of the Son of God, in which we find not only the principle but the motive of our own?

For it is natural that the members should be united to the Head; and if the Head has raised Himself to life again, does it not follow as a natural consequence that He must raise His members with Him? Now, our Head is Jesus Christ, and we are all members of Jesus Christ. I may therefore very well apply to this mystery what St. Leo said of the triumphant Ascension of the Saviour into Heaven, namely, that where the Head enters in, His members must follow. And just as Jesus Christ, according to the idea of that great Pope, did not return to His abode of glory solely for Himself, but for us, to open for us the gates of Heaven and to call us to follow Him there, so surely by the same rule and in the same sense we may conclude that it was for us that He burst asunder the gates of death, for us that He came forth from the grave, for us that He rose again. And assuredly if, as Head, it is His will that His members should do as He did, suffer as He suffered, live as He lived, die as He died, why should it not also be His will that they should rise again as He rose? Is it not just and fitting that as He has made us sharers in His labours, He should also make us sharers in His reward? and since one part of His reward is the glory of His resurrected Body—because that adorable Body has entered with His soul into the full participation in His merits—is He not, by that very fact, pledged to recompense in the same way both our soul and our body? That is the beautiful and consoling theology of St. Paul; and that is why the great

Apostle calls our Lord *the First-fruits of them that sleep* (1 Cor. xv. 20), and *the First-born from the dead* (Coloss. i. 18). The expression *First-fruits* implies or supposes something to follow, and in order to be the *First-born*, or (if you will) the *First* raised from the dead, it must necessarily be that the great company of the dead will at the Last Day be born again to a new and resurrected life. A truth so undoubted, so incontestable in the opinion of the Apostle of the Gentiles, that he does not hesitate to say that if the dead are not to rise again after the Resurrection of Jesus Christ and in virtue of that blessed Resurrection, it follows that that Resurrection is only an imaginary and fancied one; *for if the dead rise not again, neither is Christ risen again* (1 Cor. xv. 16).

It is then true that we shall rise again through Jesus Christ, or, rather, by the Almighty power of Jesus Christ. It is true that we shall rise again because Jesus Christ is risen again. And, to fill up the measure of our hope, I add that we shall rise again like unto Jesus Christ, and that His Resurrection is the model of ours. For, says St. Augustine, why did God will that the Resurrection of His Son should be so evident; and why did the only-begotten Son of God seek Himself to make it known and have it published abroad? Ah, continues the great Doctor, it was in order to reveal to us in His own Person the vast extent of our individual claims and prospects; it was in order to show us in His Person what we are destined to be, what it is possible for us to become. I need only, then, picture to myself what is most brilliant and most beautiful in the triumph of my Saviour; I have only to contemplate that glorified

Humanity, that Body (actual and material body though it is) clothed with all the qualities of a spirit, dazzling with light and crowned wth eternal splendour; such is the happy state to which I am myself to be raised and which Faith promises me. This hope is based upon the very word of God, since we have it upon the word of His Apostle. For, says that Apostle, when God shall come to lift our bodies out of the dust and to breathe into them again the breath of life, it will be in order to conform them to the Divine pattern set before us in the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, *Who will reform the body of our lowness, made like to the body of His glory* (Philip. iii. 21). Now they are bodies subject to corruption and decay, to suffering and distress; now they are frail and fragile bodies subject to death, composed of gross flesh, vile and contemptible; but then, by the most sudden and marvellous change, they will be endowed with, if I may so express myself, the same incorruptibility as the Body of a God, the same impassibility, the same immortality, the same subtilty, the same brightness, *conformed to the Body of His glory.* But all this, remember, on one condition only, namely, that we labour in this life to sanctify those bodies. And how? By Christian mortification and penance; for if in this present state of existence we have pampered them, idolized them, granted to them all that a sensual cupidity craved and demanded, and by this means made them bodies of sin, they will indeed rise again; but how? In a form unspeakably horrible and loathsome, filling with shame and confusion the soul to which they are re-united—that soul whose crimes they aided and abetted and whose torments they must share to all eternity.

Ah! what tremendous truths! Woe to him who believes them not! Woe to him who believes them and yet lives as though he held no such belief! But happy, infinitely happy the faithful soul who, not content with believing them, makes them the guide of his life, and draws from them ever-renewed, all-powerful motives to animate his fervour!

Woe to him, I say, who believes not this most essential doctrine of Christianity, this future resurrection. If there be any such among those who read these words, I would say with all the energy of a most ardent zeal and compassion, that great indeed must be the disorder of your souls, deep and deadly the root which vice has taken in them to make you cease to believe one of the fundamental truths of religion. Your heart must indeed have corrupted your mind, so as to blind and pervert it thus. For tell me, if you are still capable of yielding to reason; tell me, I repeat, which of us two stands upon the firmer ground, having the more trustworthy foundation for what he holds—you who do not believe what is declared to you concerning a future life and the resurrection of the dead, or I who believe it with a firm faith and an entire submission? On what do you base your determination not to believe, or at least to doubt of it? On your own private judgment, on your prudence, or shall we say rather on your presumption? You do not believe these mysteries because you cannot understand them, because you wish to measure everything by your senses, because you will not defer to or rely upon anything but what you have seen with your own eyes; because you say like the doubting Apostle: *Except I shall see, I will not believe* (John xx. 25). This indeed is conduct full

of ignorance and error; this is the root of your infidelity. But I, in my belief and in the faith which I have embraced and for which I should be ready to shed my blood, I take my stand upon the testimony of God Himself, upon the principles of His Providence and His wisdom, upon the truth of innumerable prophecies, upon an almost infinite number of miracles, upon the authority of the greatest men of all ages, men the most sensible, the most enlightened, the most irreproachable, the most holy. I find myself in possession of a Faith which has worked so many marvels in the universe, which has triumphed over so many kings and peoples, which has brought low and utterly destroyed so many superstitions, which has produced and brought into play so many virtues, which has had so many witnesses, which has been signed with the blood of so many martyrs, which has only grown and gathered fresh strength by means of the very persecutions waged against it, against which all the powers of earth and hell have never yet prevailed nor ever will prevail. Such are the reasons which bind me to it. Now, once again judge between these reasons and your own. Which are the more solid? which the more capable of determining a straightforward mind and of fixing it in that determination?

But, you will say, how is it possible for us to understand this resurrection of the dead? There is no question of comprehending it in order to believe it, but rather of believing it even though it should be to you absolutely incomprehensible. For the fact that you do comprehend it, or that you do not, is not what renders it in any way the more or the less true, the more or the less certain, or, consequently,

the more or the less credible. I truly marvel that you, who pique yourself upon a pretended strength of mind, should create so many difficulties with regard to this subject. As though this resurrection were not plainly possible to Almighty God our Creator; for, says St. Augustine, if He could create our bodies out of nothing, will He not be able to form them a second time out of their own proper substance, and who shall prevent Him from restoring what had already been, since He was able to make what had never been? As though this resurrection were not a thing even easy and simple to God, since He is all-powerful and nothing can resist an omnipotent power. As though all the works of creation did not more or less make this resurrection intelligible to us. A grain of wheat dies in the bosom of the earth—this is St. Paul's illustration—and it is in fact necessary that this little grain should decay and die, but do we not after a while see it spring up again in life and vigour? And is it not strange that what makes you doubt your own resurrection is the very thing whereby Providence designs to make it more intelligible to you? As though this resurrection were not in conformity with the principles of nature which, by the mutual attraction of body and soul and the intimate connection that exists between the two, imperatively demands their re-union through all eternity. As though, moreover, belief in this resurrection were not one of the most universal and the most widely spread notions in the world. Even those, said Tertullian, who deny it, yet by their sacrifices and ceremonies for the dead tacitly and as it were in spite of themselves acknowledge it; the care which they bestow upon decorating the tombs of their dead

and preserving the ashes of their departed relatives and friends, is a testimony the more divine because it is natural. It was not only, he adds, among Christians and Jews that a belief in man's resurrection existed, but among even the most barbarous people, pagans and idolaters; nor was it only an opinion confined to the people, the ignorant and unthinking, it was the conviction of the wise and the learned. As though, in fine, God had not facilitated faith in this resurrection by other resurrections seen by men and testified by irreproachable witnesses whom it is impossible to suspect of imposture without denying the Divine Writings and the most authentic history. Ah! it is enough; let us come to the root of the evil. Go and learn for once to know yourselves. You find it difficult to persuade yourselves that there is another life, a resurrection, a judgment at the Last Day, because if once persuaded of this you must begin to follow a totally different line of conduct, a line of which you fear the consequences.* And yet are the consequences of your

* "Faith is never suspected until it is found inconvenient. I do not pretend to say that among so many who speak the language of unbelief there may not be found some sufficiently corrupted in mind and heart, and so far abandoned by God, as actually and in effect to be unbelievers. But I maintain that these men, grounded in impiety, are rare. The majority of those who make a boast of their doubts, have actually none; their doubts are those of licentiousness, and not of unbelief. It is licentiousness which has formed their doubts, and not their doubts licentiousness; it is to their passions and not to their doubts that they hold, and generally they attack in religion only those truths inimical to their passions. Too, most of those who give themselves out in the world as unbelievers, have investigated neither the difficulties nor the reputable proofs of religion; they know not even enough to doubt of them."—MASSILLON, *Sermon on Doubts upon Religion.*

"There are very few people in the world who are qualified to reject the Christian doctrines."—ERNEST RENAN.

present unrestrained licence and wickedness less to be dreaded? do they offer a less terrible prospect for you? Your resurrection (says St. Augustine) will not depend upon your belief, but the happiness or misery of that resurrection will depend on your belief and on the life you live in this world. Think, then, what will be your amazement, your terror, your despair at the Last Day, if you must rise from the dead only to hear the solemn sentence which will denounce and condemn you for all eternity! if you must rise from the dead, coming forth from the shadows of the grave, only to enter into the everlasting gloom and blackness of Hell! if you must rise from the dead only that you may consummate by the re-union of body and soul your final damnation! and this because in a matter of such vital importance you would not resolve to take the only wise and safe course open to you, that of being a faithful believer and leading a good life.

III

THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST

By Bossuet

"Christ being risen from the dead, dieth now no more, death shall no more have dominion over Him. For in that He died to sin, He died once; but in that He liveth, He liveth unto God" (Rom. vii. 9-10).

Looking upon the splendid monuments of the dead, beneath which the great ones of the earth seem to be trying to hide the shame of their own corruption, I am filled with amazement at the extreme folly of men who raise trophies of such magnificence over a little handful of dust and a few dry bones. Of what avail is all this wealth of marble and bronze? this dignified title of monument or mausoleum? They are but flimsy disguises of the truth; they only serve to accentuate the triumph of death, and to illustrate the fact of our nothingness. But it is not thus with the grave of my Saviour. Death, it is true, has so far gained the mastery over the Divine Body as to lay it low in the dust, lifeless and motionless; but there the cruel power is arrested, it can go no further, it cannot touch with corruption the Sacred Flesh; and as Almighty God, according to Job (Job xxxviii. 11), said to the raging sea, so may we now say to Death: Here in this sepulchre your power ceases; this stone like an invincible rampart stops your ad-

vance; here your embrace cannot bear the seeds of corruption.

It was for this reason that our Lord Jesus Christ, after having of His own will undergone a most shameful death, yet chose that His Sepulchre should be a place set apart as it were from all other graves, a place of peculiar honour and dignity. It was in the midst of a garden, newly hewn out of a rock; and it was His will that it should be a virgin tomb like the womb of His Blessed Mother, a place in which no one yet had ever been laid. Moreover, a hundred pounds of the most precious myrrh and spices must be brought to embalm the Sacred Body, and linen the whitest to enfold it. And after His having been throughout the whole course of His earthly life *filled with reproaches*, as the Prophet tells us (Lam. iii. 30), one would almost say that in His burial He becomes fastidious and careful; and why is this, if not because He would have us understand that He was preparing for Himself a bed rather than a grave? There He rested calmly until the hour for rising had come; then in one moment He awoke, rose up, and came forth to awaken the slumbering faith of His Apostles.

On this first Easter Day the three holy Marys hastened in the early dawn to the garden, seeking their beloved Master in the tomb in which pious hands had laid Him. Angels are guarding it; and what are these words which fall upon the women's wondering ears? *Why seek you the living with the dead? He is not here. He is risen. Behold the place where they laid Him* (Luke xxiv. 5; Mark xvi. 6). O day of triumph for our Saviour! O day of joy for all the faithful! I adore Thee with my whole heart, O Jesus victorious over death! This is indeed

Thy Pasch, for it is Thy passage from death to life. Grant us Thy grace, O Divine Lord, that we may keep our Pasch with Thee, by passing from the death of sin to a holy newness of life!

But how shall I teach you what this newness of life is, all that it implies and demands of you? There is no better way than by sending you to learn your lesson in the school of the Holy Ghost and by bidding you practise diligently all the evangelical precepts. Since, however, holy doctrine is an excellent preparation for leading a good life, and since the Paschal solemnities which we are beginning to celebrate to-day invite us to dwell on these subjects, do not listen to my own thoughts but rather to those of the great Apostle St. Paul, in which, in three different passages, he reasons on the principles laid down in my text and draws from them the following conclusions. (1) Jesus, he tells us, *died;* and he adds: *He died to sin* (Rom. vi. 10). If, then, we desire to participate in His death, we too must die to sin. (2) Jesus being dead took to Himself a new life, a life no longer according to the flesh but wholly and entirely according to God, for *in that He liveth, He liveth unto God* (Rom. vi. 10). We too, then, must pass on to a new life, which must be absolutely supernatural. (3) Jesus being risen from the dead, *dieth no more, death hath no more dominion over Him* (Rom. vi. 9). If, then, we would rise again with Him, we must live now and to all eternity in His grace, and the death of sin must have no more dominion over our souls.

Our Saviour died, let us die with Him. He rose again, let us rise with Him. He lives for ever, let us live for ever with Him. Let us bring those great

truths home to our hearts, by trying to understand the simple teaching of the Gospel as regards them; and above all things let us learn from them how absolute is the necessity that we should die with our Divine Saviour.

Our dying with Christ.

Why is it, think you, that St. Paul speaks of nothing but death and burial, when he wishes to depict the conversion of a sinner; and why does he continually insist upon the fact that we must die to sin with Jesus Christ and must crucify the old man; why does he use these and many other similar assertions which at first sight seem strange to us? Surely this is somewhat exaggerated language if he only means to imply that we must curb our evil inclinations and make some change for the better in our mode of thinking, speaking, and acting! Human nature is of itself so variable, our dispositions and affections are so liable to alteration, that one would have thought he might have used simpler and less far-fetched expressions when speaking on this subject. It seems to me, however, that there is some deep, hidden meaning in this apparently extravagant form of language; a meaning which by that very extravagance he invites us to search out and having found to lay to heart. Let me try to help you in this search, first by showing you why the conversion of the sinner is called a death (and the reason for this lies in one of the properties of sin); secondly, by showing you that we *must* die to sin with our Saviour (and this insisted point will be considered in the light of a remedy applied to sin as a disease). From these

two considerations will naturally spring a third for the instruction of sinners.

All sin, we know, must have its origin or first principle in the will; but in man it has a most strange property, namely, that it is at the same time voluntary and natural. The Pelagians, not understanding this truth, could not endure to be told that we were all born in original sin. They vehemently asserted that to teach this doctrine was to insult and do outrage to nature, the handiwork of God. They did not understand that the human race having been tainted and corrupted at its very source by the voluntary act, by the deliberate wilful sin of its first parent, that same taint and corruption of will had been handed down as a second nature to all his descendants. Need I dwell more fully upon the details of the sad story of that first sin which *brought death into the world and all our woes?* You know only too well how the first man, seduced by the deceitful counsels of the cunning serpent, longed ardently to make a trial of his liberty, and yielded to that longing. The holy Pontiff Innocent tells us that our father Adam, not acknowledging that all his powers of mind and body, his free will, intelligence, his senses, and every other natural gift were bestowed upon him by the hand of God to Whom they belonged, used them with careless inconsideration; that, his heart being thus lifted up against the Divine Giver, he lost that natural empire over himself which he had hitherto possessed. Shame which until now had been unknown to him was the first of all his passions to reveal to him the rebellion of the others. He became inflated with a vehement longing to know good and evil; and so it was (as Tertullian says) that, by the just judgment

of God, the first thing of which he became conscious was that he must needs blush. This is most strange. Suddenly, in an instant's flash, he *perceived his nakedness* (Gen. iii. 7); that is to say, he began to feel an unexpected and hitherto unknown revolt and strife within him; and the flesh rising up in rebellion against his reason, he was confused and perplexed at his inability to quell and subjugate it.

But perhaps I am dwelling too long upon these well-known facts; for the present it is enough to remind you that we are all unhappily born of these shameful passions, which being kindled by sin rise up in the flesh to the confusion of the spirit. This is only too true, and St. Augustine draws from the fact the same conclusion as that which St. John tells us was drawn by our Saviour when He said: *That which is born of the flesh, is flesh* (John iii. 6). What (asks St. Augustine) is the meaning of this assertion? The flesh, here so-called in the phraseology of Scripture, signifies those corrupt inclinations which are in opposition to the law of God; it is therefore as though our Divine Master had said, speaking more at length and more definitely: 'O miserable degraded humanity! poor souls of men! all you who are born of this revolt are, by a natural sequence, born rebels against God, the enemies of your Creator. *That which is born of the flesh, is flesh;* you receive at one and the same time and through the same channels the life of the body and the death of the soul.* That which

*To a gentleman who said that he did not believe in original sin, nor in the necessity of baptism, and that he could not see how any man of common sense could accept the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary, the late Archbishop P. J. Ryan, of Philadelphia, replied: "You do not believe in original sin; therefore you believe that you were conceived without original sin. But to be conceived without original sin is to have an immaculate

engenders you kills you; and the substance of which you are formed being infected at its source, sin attaches itself to and incorporates itself with your very nature. Hence this depth of ignorance, hence these repeated falls, hence these unbridled lusts which are the cause of all the troubles, the agitations, the miseries of human life: *That which is born of the flesh, is flesh.*' And I ask you to see for yourselves what are the consequences, the results of this fact.

Philosophers teach that birth and death are on the same plane, and almost inseparably united to each other. All that dies has been born; all that is born may die: it is death which deprives us of what birth gives us. You are a man by your birth, you only cease to be a man by death. The union of soul and body is effected by birth; it is death which dissolves that union. Now, until corrupt nature is healed and cured of its disease, to be a man and to be a sinner is one and the same thing; the soul does not cling more closely to the body than does sin with all its evil inclinations cling, so to speak, to the substance of the soul. For if sin has its birth, it will by a natural sequence have its life and its death: it derives its birth from our corrupt nature, its life from our ill-regulated appetites; it is, therefore, not without reason that we give the name of death to that marvellous cure which the healing power of grace effects in our fallen nature, delivering it from the tyranny of sin; not without reason that the conversion of a sinner is called a death. No wonder, then, O great Apostle, that it is your wont to speak of it

conception. Therefore, you believe in your own immaculate conception, and in the immaculate conception of the Blessed Virgin, and in everybody's immaculate conception."

thus. You would have us understand how deeply seated are our wounds, how sin and the inclination to evil have become in us a second nature, and how, seeing that they were born with us, nothing less strong than death will have power to uproot them from our souls.

Already, as it seems to me, we thus have some light thrown upon this thought of St. Paul's, drawn, as indeed it is, not from the proud, self-asserting maxims of worldly wisdom, but from the reverent, submissive principles of Christian humility. We feel no shame in avowing the infirmites of our nature; let those who know not their Deliverer, blush for them. On the contrary, we even dare to glory in our infirmities, knowing as we do the mercy of the Great Physician and the virtue of the remedy applied by Him. This remedy is, as you know, the death of our Divine Lord; and since we are touching upon this subject, let us listen to the reasoning of St. Paul. *The Son of God*, he says, *died to sin; therefore, so do you also reckon that you are dead indeed to sin* (Rom. vi. 10-11). What does he mean by saying that our Lord died to sin? our Lord Who from the very first moment of His conception always lived in and by grace? If we would grasp the full meaning of the Apostle's words, we must carry our thoughts back further and lift them a little higher, so that we may come face to face with some very remarkable points in his teaching.

Let me help you in attempting to do this by a homely but yet a painful example. If you have ever happened to find yourselves on the spot where a public execution has just taken place with all its grim attendant circumstances, have you not often been

disposed to judge of the heinousness of the condemned man's crime from the various details of the punishment inflicted and even from the distorted ghastliness of the criminal's features? You may wonder at my recalling to your mind anything so horrible; but it is because I want to bring home to you the fact that from the nature of the penalty we may always gain some idea of the magnitude of the crime. O my Divine Saviour, may we dare to apply this example to Thee? Yes, undoubtedly, since Thou hast appeared upon earth as a criminal. It was Thy Divine Will to make Thyself like unto sinners; and, although without sin, Thou hast deigned to undergo all its penalties during Thy life upon earth. Thy Sacred Flesh was subject to the same infirmities which sin only had brought upon ours, and therefore it is that St. Paul ventures to say that Thou were *in the likeness of sinful flesh* (Rom. viii. 3). Oh, Miracle of Divine goodness! It was not enough that the Son of the Eternal Father should clothe Himself in human flesh, veiling thus His dignity, His Divinity: but, more than this, for love of us He wraps around that Flesh, purer than the light of the sun, and worthy to be adorned with glory and immortality; He wraps around it as a garment the image of our sin! Is not this enough to overwhelm and confound us? What, then, will it be when we realize that by this means our sins are blotted out, our disease is cured. This, this is indeed the supremest, the most amazing feature of Divine Mercy.

Where was the image of sin? In His most Sacred Flesh. Where was sin itself? In you and in me. The Sacred Flesh of the Saviour, that most innocent image of sin, was delivered up into the hands of the

executioners to be dealt with according to their will. They struck Him, and their blows rebounded upon sin; they crucified Him, and sin was crucified; they deprived Him of life, and at the same moment sin died: this is exactly what the Apostle would have us understand by his words. The Saviour, according to St. Paul's teaching, died to sin, because He annihilated sin by abandoning to death His innocent Flesh on which He carried the image of the world's sins.* But may we conclude from this that we too must die with Him, *so that we also reckon that we are dead indeed to sin?* Yes, assuredly; the sequence is most simple; we need only raise our eyes and contemplate our Divine Master hanging upon the Cross. O my God! how have they treated this innocent Flesh! Whichever way I turn my eyes, I can see no whole part in it! What! Because it bore the image of sin, is it His Will that it should be thus torn and lacerated, while we are so tender, so sparing in our dealings with the sin which is actually alive in our souls! We never mortify our lusts, but rather allow ourselves to be blindly carried away by them. Let us beware of this; let us, this very day, make as it were a loving exchange with our Divine Saviour. Innocent though He was, He put on the similitude of our sins, submitting to the penalty of death; guilty though we are, let us imprint upon ourselves the image of His holy death, so that we may be sharers in His innocence; for when we bear the likeness of His Death, by the marvellous operation of the Spirit

* "In His Passion the Saviour was carrying the load of the world's sins, and, all-holy though He was, He carried the image of them on His very face. He looked like some outcast or outlaw who had frightful guilt upon him. He had been made sin for us, Who knew no sin."—CARD. NEWMAN.

of God its virtue is applied to our souls. This is why the Apostle exhorts us to bear the image of Jesus Crucified in our mortal bodies, to have His death in our members, to conform ourselves to His death (2 Cor. iv. 10).

But what hand can be skilful, patient, persevering enough to trace in us this resemblance at once so mysterious and so beautiful? Only the hand of Love; Love alone has power to do it. On this glad Easter morning, Love will go with Magdalene, anxious, eager, expectant, to adore the Saviour in His Sepulchre; Love, prostrate before that innocent Body which lies there cold and motionless as the rock which forms its resting place, prostrate and gazing upon the Sacred Form, will produce its lineaments in our souls and bodies. Those Divine Eyes so tender and so sweet, which with one single glance melted St. Peter's heart so that he wept bitterly, have now lost their gentle heavenly light; Love will lay its hand upon ours and keep them closed to all the vain glitter, the vanities, the follies of this poor world. Those Divine Lips, from which flowed as a living stream the words of eternal life, are sealed by death; Love will for ever close our lips to blasphemy and slander. Love will shut the door of our hearts, so that the idle pleasures of earth can find no entrance there; it will gently but firmly bind our hands, so that they cannot snatch greedily at what is not our own; it will, with a passionate persistence, urge us to throw ourselves in an absolute self-abandonment upon that beloved Corpse, drawing around us as a shroud the grave clothes which enfold our beloved Master. That is what the Apostle means when he tells us that we are *buried with Christ in baptism.*

The early Christians liked to have the Sign of the Cross imprinted all over their bodies, as though to impress upon their every sense the mark of the Crucified and to be reminded continually of the death which they had undergone in and with Him. Of course we ourselves have this ceremony in constant daily use, but with (I fear) little consideration of all that it demands of us; of that marvellous detachment, that self-surrender, that mortification of the senses, which St. Paul urges upon us, and which those early Christians kept constantly in mind. For we know that as Christians we must all die with Jesus Christ. Yes, we must die, because sin being contracted by birth can only detach itself by a species of death. We must die, because we must apply to ourselves both the similitude and the virtue of our Saviour's death which is the only cure for our diseases. Those are the two reasons: the first drawn from one of the properties of sin, the second from the quality of the remedy. Let us, in the third place, not forget what is indeed a natural consequence of those reasons.

Listen to the grave and solemn teaching of the great Apostle, and try to enter into its full meaning. Do not for one moment imagine that while speaking to us of nothing but death and burial he is only demanding of us an ordinary and perfunctory change of life. Vain indeed is it to have tried to show you how closely sin clings to our fallen nature, if you still think that it only needs a slight effort to detach yourselves from it, and if you imagine that Christianity only demands of you some superficial, external reformation and the adoption of a few religious practices. This is not St. Paul's teaching. He bids you treat sin as Jesus Christ treated its similitude in His

own sacred Flesh. Look at your Crucifix; see if He spared that tortured Body one pang of keenest agony! and then ask yourselves how it is possible that you do not yet understand that you must search down into the deepest recesses of your hearts for whatever evil desires may be growing there, and root them up without one moment's hesitation. Yes; I tell you, and our Divine Lord Himself told you, that whatever the object may be which separates you from God, even should it be more precious to you than the sight of your eyes, more necessary to you than the cunning of your right hand, dearer to you than life itself, it must be *cut off from you* (Matt. v. 30). It is not without reason that the Apostle takes death so continually as the text of his discourse; he would have us understand that we must wage war unceasingly, yes, and war to the knife, against our most natural inclinations, even should those inclinations be bound up indissolubly with our very heart-strings so that death to them means death to ourselves also. Then, arm yourselves with the sword of justice; conquer by continual acts of penance the sin which strives to reign in your bodies. Do not plead the idle excuse that you have done enough, that you have already unburdened your consciences to your confessor. Reflect for a moment on the words of Origen, who says: "Never think that it is sufficient to be renewed once; you must renew that renewal itself." He means that whatever measure of sanctity and justice you may have been so happy as to obtain as your portion of the graces meted out to the penitent, and even if you were as just as you presume yourselves to be, there are always a thousand things which need renewal by the faithful practice of penance.

And still more is this the case when you have not yet atoned for your faults, when you feel in your soul re-opened wounds, and are conscious of old habits of evil still alive and working within you.

Bear in mind that penance is our practice, the Saviour's Death our pattern, His Cross our portion, His Sepulchre our dwelling-place. Ah! that Sepulchre is to us a mother: my Master entered it a lifeless corpse, but by it He was born to a new Divine life; so too must I, after having there died to sin, seek and find the life of Grace.

Our rising with Christ.

St. Augustine asserts that there are two kinds of life in the soul: the one which it communicates to the body, the other from which it draws its own individual existence. The holy Bishop considers that as the soul is the life of the body so God is the life of the soul. Let us try to explain his thought and to follow his reasoning. If the soul is to give life to the body it must of necessity possess three properties: it must be nobler than the body, for it is more noble to give than to receive; it must be united to the body, for it is manifest that our life cannot be outside of ourselves; it must impart to the body powers of operation which otherwise that body cannot possibly exercise, for it is certain that life consists principally in action. Now, if we find that God possesses in a supreme degree all those three qualities in relation to our souls, it becomes a positive, an undoubted certainty that His claim to be the life of the soul is as well established as is the claim of the soul to be the life of the body. Let us, in a very few words, show how this matter stands.

In the first place, that God is incomparably exalted above the soul cannot and may not for one moment be contested. God would not be our sovereign good, if He were not nobler than we are, and if we were not infinitely better and greater when united to Him than when left to ourselves. As regards this union, it is impossible for any Christian to doubt it, when our Saviour so repeatedly said that the *Holy Ghost would dwell in our souls* (John xiv. 17), and the Apostle, that *the charity of God is poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Ghost Who is given to us* (Rom. v. 5). And, indeed, seeing that God is our one and perfect joy, it follows of necessity that it must be possible for Him to unite Himself to our souls; since it is inconceivable that our joy and our bliss should not be within us. It remains, then, to be seen whether or not our soul is, by this union, raised to some possibility of action loftier and grander than its own natural powers could be capable of attaining. Let us still keep close to St. Augustine and his teaching. "Assuredly," he says, "God is an immutable Life; He is always what He is, always in Himself, always belonging to Himself." It is impossible, therefore, but that the soul should become better, nobler, more excellent when united to this Sovereign Being Who is supreme in excellence and goodness; being better, the soul will act better; and you see this in the just. "For," continues St. Augustine, "the soul, lifting itself up to God Who is so far above it and yet of Whom it is, receives justice, piety, wisdom poured down upon it from this storehouse of perfection." Then it believes in God, it hopes in God, it loves God; or rather, as St. Paul says that *the Spirit of God with groanings unspeakable asks for us* (Rom.

viii. 26), so it behoves us to say that the same Spirit believes, hopes, and loves in our souls, because He it is Who creates in us this faith, this hope, this sacred love. Consequently, to believe in God, to hope in Him, and to love Him are all wholly Divine operations which the soul could never achieve without the operation, the union, the communication of the Spirit of God; they are also actions of life, and of an eternal life: it is, then, true that God is our life.

O joy of joys! Who would not esteem himself happy indeed to live such a life? Who would not prize it far above every other blessing? Who would not a thousand times rather run the risk of losing this poor mortal life than that immortal life, the life divine? Yet Adam lost it for himself and for all his descendants; and had it not been for the intervention of the Son of God, we should for ever have been deprived of it: *I am come*, our Divine Lord says, *that they may have life, and may have it more abundantly* (John x. 10). Indeed, it is my great joy to notice that in all the discourses of our Saviour which the Gospels hand down to us, like a golden thread running through them, the one subject of this undying mystic life pervades them. Hence it is that St. Peter, when asked by our Lord if he desired to leave Him, answered: *Lord, to whom should we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life* (John vi. 69); and the Son of God Himself says: *The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life;*—and this because He well knew that as nothing is dearer to men than their own existence, no charm could have such power over them as this hope of eternal life. This is why St. Clement of Alexandria, in the beautiful hymn

addressed by him to Jesus, speaks thus: "The Divine Fisherman draws the fish out of the stormy sea of this world into His own net, by the sweet attraction, the seductive bait of a life that knows no ending, of joys that never cease."

And here let us raise our thoughts for a moment, that we may see in the Person of our Saviour Jesus Christ the source of our life. The life of God is wholly made up of reason and intelligence; and the Son of God, proceeding from this life and this intelligence, is Himself life and intelligence. This is why the Fathers speak of Him as the life, the reason, the light, and the intelligence of the Father; and there is a good foundation for this teaching in the Scriptures. Being then Himself essential Life, it is for Him to promise and to give life. The Sacred Humanity which in the fulness of time He deigned to take upon Himself, touching so closely upon Life, is impregnated with its virtue to such an extent that from it there flows an inexhaustible stream of living water, of which whosoever drinks shall have eternal life. It would be vain to try and tell you all the beautiful sayings of the Fathers, especially of the great St. Cyril of Alexandria, on this subject. It is enough to remind you of what is given to you at the holy Altar, of what at this Easter time all the faithful are called to partake of. Is it common bread that is offered to you? Nay, is it not the Bread of Life? or, rather, is it not a Living Bread of which you must eat if you would have life? Yes, for this Bread is the Sacred Flesh of Jesus, that Living Flesh, that Flesh wholly filled and penetrated by a vivifying Spirit. For if our common bread which has no life in it preserves that of our bodies, think how glorious that life must

be which we live, we who eat of a Living Bread and at the Table of the Living God! Why, this is a marvel! a miracle! To Jesus, and to Him alone, does it belong to give us such Divine Food. He Who is Himself the Life must, in giving us Himself for our Food, give us life. O delicious Banquet of the children of God! O Table spread with dainties! O Food containing in Itself all sweetness! What must that life be which is so nourished and sustained! how priceless its value! how eternal its duration!

But remember that this wonderful divinely-sustained life has its various stages of progress—its immaturity, its growth, its perfection—in the same way, so to speak, as the natural mortal life. God Who by His presence within the souls of the just quickens them, nevertheless does not give life to them instantaneously, in (as it were) a sudden flash of illumination. If, however, we consider all the admirable changes and developments which He brings about in them during the course of this most happy, supernatural life, we cannot fail to love it; and if we love it, we shall be fervently, eagerly desirous to preserve it, to make it ours for all eternity. Let this be our aim—to reproduce in ourselves the undying, the eternal life of the Risen Saviour; this is the lesson which the Feast of the Resurrection teaches us; this is indeed its natural consequence. Let me in a few words show you that it is so.

That eagle of the Apocalypse which came flying through the air, crying with a piercing note, *Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth* (Apoc. viii. 13), seems by this triple denunciation to prefigure the threefold calamity which has befallen our nature. Man, in his state of original righteousness, being

wholly animated by the Spirit of God, received from this indwelling Spirit the three gifts of innocence, peace, and immortality. The devil by sin robbed him of innocence; concupiscence, having risen up within him, disturbed his peace; and immortality yielded to the claims of death: and thus we see the work of Satan in opposition to the work of God. Now, the Son of God came *to destroy the work of the devil* (Heb. ii. 14) and to bring man back again to the state originally designed for him by his Creator. This we are told by St. Paul, who adds, that in order to effect this the Eternal Father has shed forth His Spirit into the souls of the just, and that this Spirit ceases not *to renew them day by day* (2 Cor. iv. 16). It is not the will of God that they should be changed all at once. There are three gifts to be restored to them; there are also three different stages through which they must pass and become, step by step, *perfect men* (Eph. iv. 13). O great Apostle, these are your own words, and you shall be our guide to-day. God has thus ordered things in order to show His beloved ones the operations of His grace one by one; therefore in this life He restores their innocence, in Heaven He gives them peace, in the general resurrection He adorns them with immortality. By these three stages the just attain to the fulness of Jesus Christ, *to the measure of the age of the fulness of Christ* (Eph. iv. 13). This present life is like childhood; that which the Saints enjoy in Heaven resembles the flower of youth; later on, in the general resurrection, maturity will follow. In this supernatural life there is no old age, because being wholly divine it is not subject to waste or decay; hence it is that it has only three ages, whereas our life on

earth passes through all the vicissitudes of four different periods.

Let me explain what I mean by saying that the saints in this world are, so to speak, in their childhood. All that is to follow in the course of life should have its beginning in childhood. Now, we have said that the operation of the Holy Ghost, by which He animates the just, consists wholly in overcoming in them those three furious, bitter enemies stirred up in them by the devil: sin, concupiscence, and death. And how does God deal with them in this life? First of all, He entirely destroys sin, justifying us by grace; concupiscence, however, still stirs within them, it struggles feebly, but a vigorous war is waged against it and it is overcome; as for death, it indeed still holds its sway there unresisted, but then there is the promise of immortality, and our bodies are prepared for that immortality by becoming the temples of the Holy Ghost. Consider this progress in the just. On the ruins of sin rises the stronghold of their sanctification; the battle with concupiscence is the exercise which perfects their strength and energy; the promised immortality is the foundation of their hope. And in these three particulars do you not recognise the child's true characteristics? Innocence is restored to them as it is to children; and if the Holy Ghost wrestles within them against concupiscence, it is only in order to strengthen them by gentle degrees, and to mould their lineaments into conformity with the image of our Divine Lord; and can there be anything more suitable than to set before them continually (as is done in the case of children of high birth and distinction) the hope of an inheritance glorious and undefiled? O blessed childhood

of the Christian! It has, I know, its troubles and its tears; but remembering what magnificent promises are attached to it, and to what heights of sun-lit glory its poor beginnings lead, who would not count himself highly favoured and happy beyond words to lead such a life!

For in the period which follows, and which because of its vigour and healthy energy I compare to youth in its fresh beauty, what peace and serenity reign! Here below even the holiest souls are at times troubled and tossed by an infinity of vain desires. It is true that God dwells within these souls, but He does not dwell there alone; a thousand idle fancies, poor earthly cravings, thrust in by the flesh, intrude upon that Divine presence incessantly, unweariedly; because, though failing to detach these souls from Him to Whom they cling so closely and so lovingly, this rebellious flesh strives at least to distract and trouble them. Therefore it is that they sigh and moan, crying out with the Apostle: *Unhappy man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body?* (Rom. vii. 24). But, on the other hand, for the peaceful life which the Saints enjoy in Heaven St. Augustine gives this beautiful motto: *Concupiscence at last extinct, charity consummated.* To my mind, these few words have a most weighty meaning. They seem to tell us that the soul, having laid down the burden of the body, feels a marvellous co-operation of all its powers tending, aiming, working towards one and the same end. Now, at last, God and God alone dwells in that soul, reigns in it, dominates it, because it is wholly and entirely absorbed in God, because it is possessed solely and absolutely by that Spirit of Life Whose presence it experiences. The soul yields itself so

quietly to this attraction; it tastes, in so doing, so profound a peace, that it is scarcely able to comprehend fully its own happiness; so little can mortals like ourselves form an idea of it.

Does it not seem as if to desire more than this would be a folly? and yet you know that there is a third stage, in which our life will be perfected because our happiness will be consummated. In the two first stages Jesus Christ extinguishes in His saints the fires of sin and all fleshly desires; finally, in this last stage of both the world and the human race, after His having trampled under foot all our other enemies, the subjugation of death will crown His victories. And how will our Divine Lord do this? Well, if you ask me this question in the spirit of a true Christian, that is to say, not to gratify an idle curiosity, but to strengthen your faith and hope, I will answer you by quoting some words of St. Augustine's, marvellous because drawn from the teaching of St. Paul. All changes that are wrought in the Saints are brought about by the operation of the Spirit of God. Now St. Augustine teaches us that this Spirit has His abode in the soul because He is that soul's life. If, then, this Spirit does not dwell in the body, how can it be that He renews it? The great Doctor solves the difficulty for us by laying down a very clear principle. He says: "He possesses the whole who has in his keeping the dominant part. In you the noblest part, that is to say, the soul, is the part which holds the pre-eminence. And therefore God, holding as He does what is best and greatest in you, namely, your soul, enters by means of that greater part into possession of the lesser, that is to say, your body."

What are we, then, to infer from this teaching of St. Augustine's? The inference is very clear. God, dwelling in our souls, has taken possession of our bodies also; therefore, O Death! you cannot snatch them from Him; you imagine that they are your spoil, but they are really only a deposit consigned to your keeping for a while; sooner or later God will reclaim His own. *That which My Father hath given Me is greater than all*, says the Son of God; *and no one can snatch them out of My Father's hand* (John x. 29). Therefore, great deeps, and fierce devouring flames, and you too, earth, at once the mother and the grave of poor humanity, you all shall render up these bodies which you have engulfed and hidden out of sight; and sooner shall the world itself be overwhelmed than a single one of our hairs shall perish; because the Spirit Who animates the Son of God, animates us also. He will then work in us as He did in our Lord, and will make us like to Him; for as the Son of God assures us that He Himself does nothing but what He sees His Father do (John v. 19), so too the Holy Ghost Who receives of the Son (John xvi. 15), regards Him as the pattern of all these operations carried on in the soul. All in whom He dwells must of necessity be transformed into His resemblance; the Apostle tells us this when he says: *If you have in you the Spirit of Him Who raised up Jesus from the dead, He will quicken your mortal bodies* (Rom. viii. 11). And just as the germ put by nature into the grain of corn, preserving itself there amid all changes and alternations of weather and seasons, brings forth in the fulness of time a perfect ear of wheat like that from which it was taken, so will the Spirit of Life, having descended upon us

from the fulness of Jesus Christ, renew us gradually little by little, according to the various vicissitudes ordained by Providence, until at last He will restore us to a body and a life like to our Lord's, neither corruption nor death having been able to hinder His wonder-working power.

This is why St. Paul, dwelling upon the thought of our Risen Master, urges us so strongly to rise with Him. Hitherto, he says, my Master's life had been hidden beneath the veil of His mortal body; we knew not yet either the beauty of that life or the magnificence of our own hopes. Now, I see Him wholly changed; there is no more infirmity in His Sacred Flesh; there is in it nothing that breathes of sin or its similitude; *He is dead to sin* (Rom. vi. 10). He has stripped from Him that mortality which hid His glory; the Divinity which animates His Spirit is shed forth also upon His Body; in that Body I see God only, because I no longer see anything there but glory and majesty. He only lives in God; He only lives through God; He only lives for God: *in that He liveth, He liveth unto God* (Rom. vi. 11). I know that if I begin to live with Him on earth, His Spirit which quickens me will also renew me according to His image. Courage! (says the Apostle); what by faith we believe in the Person of the Son of God that same faith should make us hope for ourselves. Jesus is risen as the first-fruits of our nature. In that first golden ear of wheat, which is Jesus Christ, God has shown us how He will deal with all the other precious grain which He will gather into His storehouse. Judge of the harvest by these first-fruits, says St. Augustine; *Christ is the first-fruits* (1 Cor. xv. 23).

Sometimes I hear good people sighing after the

joys of the golden age of innocence. Oh! they cry, if we were only as they were who lived in the Earthly Paradise. Well, there is no doubt but that that life was a very sweet and blissful one; and yet the Apostle tells you that you are not Christians if you do not aspire to something more than that. To possess that happiness is, at the most, to be like Adam; and St. Paul teaches you that you ought all to be like Jesus Christ (Col. iii. 4). No less a promise is held out to you than that of being seated with Him on His Throne. The Saviour says: *To him that shall overcome I will give to sit with Me on My Throne* (Apoc. iii. 21).

After this do you expect me to give you any further reasons to prove that this life should be immortal? is it not enough to have shown you its beauty and its hopes to make you fervently long for it? Truly, when I see Christians coming at this Easter time to draw from the Sacraments as from a life-giving stream this immortality, and then going back to plunge again into the mire of sin, my heart aches for them. They eat the Bread of Life, and go back to death; they cleanse their souls in the waters of Penance, and wallow again in the gutter; they receive the Spirit of God, and live like the brutes. Fools! madmen that you are! do you not understand the destruction upon which you are rushing? the glorious hopes which in one moment you are dashing to the ground? Guard as your most precious treasure this immortal life; perhaps if you lose it this time, it may never be restored to you. Lay to heart the teaching that in the original designs of God this life could neither be given nor lost more than once. Adam lost it, and all would have been at an end, the loss would

have been irretrievable, had it not been for the intervention of the Son of God. Now He restores it to us in Holy Baptism. And if even we should chance to defile our Baptismal innocence, He for the sake of His Divine Son permits Himself to give sanctifying grace back to us by means of Penance. Still, however, He does not wholly abandon His original design. The oftener we lose grace, the more difficult He makes it for us to regain it. In Baptism He gives it to us so easily that we scarcely think about the gift. If we lose it we must have recourse to the tears, the travail, the pains of penance. But, if it be true that the recovery of grace becomes more and more difficult, what of us who have so often received and so often despised it? How comes it that the health of our soul is not in an absolutely hopeless condition? Tertullian says that those who are afraid of offending God after having obtained the remission of their sins, dread becoming debtors to the Divine mercy. Those, then, who have no such fear, are debtors to that mercy. Hardened sinner, coming again and again unblushingly to bring the same foul stains to the cleansing waters of Penance, for how many years have you not poured into the ears of your confessor the same miserable stories of your sins? Surely if you had grasped the fact that grace and pardon were not your due, your right, you would be more fearful of losing such a treasure! you would tremble lest in the end God should withhold His absolving hand! whereas you come back so often and without one vestige of fear or doubt or hesitation, that it is certain you must imagine what you demand is your due. You think that God will always gladly receive you! I would have you know rather that you are a poor

burdensome debtor dependent on His mercy; that He, so to speak, regretfully bestows what you claim as a right; and that if you persevere in this course of action He will at last shake you off and no longer permit you to enjoy His benefits.

Let us awake from sleep; let us try, this once at least, to be immortal, to live an undying life of grace with our Risen Saviour. Do not let us be like those who think they have done all when they have made their Confession; the chief thing still remains to be done, that is, to change our ways and modes of action, to root out our bad habits. If you have been justified, you need not indeed any longer fear eternal damnation; but do not, on that account, imagine yourselves perfectly safe, *lest a false security should produce in you a fatal negligence.* Fear sin, dread your own evil inclinations, fear above all those dangerous occasions which have already so often made shipwreck of your innocence. Let this fear force upon you the necessity of using wholesome precautions; for penance has in itself two qualities which are both equally necessary. It is the remedy for the past; it is also a precaution for the future. The disposition necessary for receiving it as a remedy for the past, is sorrow for the sins which we have committed; the disposition necessary for receiving it as a precaution for the future, is a filial fear of the sins which we might commit and of the occasions which might lead us to commit them. May God give us this fear which is the safeguard of virtue!

Ah! Christians, let us fear to lose Jesus Who has won us by His Blood. Wherever I see Him, His arms are outstretched to us! Jesus Crucified extends His arms to us. 'Come,' He cries; 'come and

die here with Me! It is good for you to be here, because I am here!' Jesus risen extends His arms to us. 'Come,' He cries, 'come and live with Me; you shall be what you see Me to be! I am glorious, I am immortal.' Be you immortal now by grace, and one day you shall be immortal in glory!

IV

WHIT SUNDAY

THE LETTER AND THE SPIRIT

By Bossuet

" The letter killeth, but the spirit quickeneth (2 Cor. iii. 6).

The feast we celebrate to-day is that of the promulgation of the New Law. I announce to you, in the name of Jesus, that by the coming down of the Holy Ghost you are no longer under the Mosaic Law, and that God has called you to the Law of Grace: and, in order that you might understand what is that law from which you are delivered, and what is the law which is imposed on you, I set before you the words of St. Paul, who will teach you the difference between the two. *The letter*, that is to say, the Old Law, *killeth*, he says; *and the Spirit*, which is (as you shall see) the law of grace, *quickeneth*. Therefore, following the teaching of St. Paul, let us see how the Law kills us through the letter, and how grace gives us life by the Spirit.

The Letter which Killeth.

In order fully to sound the depths of our text, we must first consider what is the letter which kills, of

which the Apostle is speaking. And, first of all, it is quite certain that he is referring to the Law: but inasmuch as we might understand this to mean the Ceremonial Law, which, with its circumcision and sacrifices that have been abolished by Christianity, and with even some of its figurative language taken too literally, may be said to kill the soul; lest, I say, you should take this Ceremonial Law to be what the Apostle means by *the letter which kills*, let me tell you at once that he is speaking of the Decalogue, which is the most sacred part of the Law. Yes, those ten Commandments, which so openly and so solemnly forbid sin, are what the Apostle calls *the letter which killeth*. This is plainly to be gathered from the context. For St. Paul, immediately after having said that the letter kills, speaking of the Law, calls it *a ministration of death engraven with letters upon stones* (2 Cor. iii. 7). The ministration of death is undoubtedly the letter which kills; and the letters engraven upon stones, are they not the two tables given to Moses on which the Law was written by the finger of God? It is therefore most evident that it is this Law given to Moses, this most holy Law of the Decalogue, which the Apostle calls the ministration of death and consequently the letter which kills. This is why, in the Epistle to the Romans, he speaks of it in the most positive terms as *a law of death* (Rom. vii. 6) and a law of condemnation. He says that *the strength of sin is in the Law* (1 Cor. xv. 56); that without the law sin is dead, and that the law gives it life; that sin betrays us by the commandments of the law (Rom. vii. 8, 9, 11). And he adds many other statements of similar import.

And yet how perplexing it all seems to us! Listen

to these majestic words: *Hear, O Israel, I am the Lord thy God; thou shalt not have strange gods in My sight* (Deut. v. 6-7). Is it possible that they can be a letter which kills? can a Law so holy deserve such a title bestowed upon it by an Apostle of Jesus Christ? Let us try to unravel this entanglement, with the help of that Holy Spirit Who on this day filled the hearts of the Apostles. The question is not indeed an easy one to answer, it concerns matters far beyond the reach of unassisted human intellect; but as it is of the deepest importance to piety, God will give us grace to deal with it successfully. As regards myself, so fearful am I of going astray that I intend to follow closely step by step in the footprints of that incomparable guide St. Augustine, who in two of his works gives an admirable explanation of this great truth.

When St. Paul calls the Law a letter which kills, and speaks of it as giving new powers to sin, be sure that he is not blaming the Law, but deploring the weakness of human nature. If, then, you wish to understand the Apostle, learn first to know what are the deadly diseases, the paralysing languors, which have weighed us down ever since the Fall of our First Parent, from whom, as from the original stock, corruption and decay have spread through the whole human race.

And in order better to understand our infirmities, let us consider first what was the end for which our nature was destined. Assuredly, since it had pleased Almighty God to let a spark of that Divine fire which enlightens all intelligent creatures fall upon our souls, our actions ought undoubtedly to be guided by reason. Now there could be nothing more reasonable

than to consecrate all that we are to Him Whose liberality has so richly endowed us; and therefore our most natural inclination should be to love and to serve God; in this the whole of our being should be at one, having no other aim and purpose. Then, passing on a step further, I say that the senses being inferior to the intelligence, the gifts and graces of the senses must yield to those of the mind; hence it follows in natural sequence that the affections of man ought to be so regulated that the mind should dominate the body, that reason should control the senses, and that the Creator should be preferred to the creature. It is very evident that nothing is more just, and that if human nature were only upright and incorrupt such would be its inclinations.

But, O my God! how far removed are we from such a state of things! how strangely perverted in this once noble disposition! Now, through the disorder induced by sin, our natural inclinations turn to very different objects; for certainly the majority of men follow their natural inclinations, and it is not difficult to see what it is in these days which rules and dominates the world. At the first glance one would be inclined to say that the senses hold undisputed sway there, that reason is cowed and trampled upon, that she can never gain a hearing unless she favours the passions, that we have no strong attachment except to creatures, and that if we go on in the same course we shall end by forgetting God. Heaven forbid that this should come to pass! Think for a moment what was the condition of the world before the preaching of the Gospel. Where, at that time, was the dominion of God? to whom then did His creatures offer incense? Who does not know that

the whole earth was at that time so given over to idolatry, that this vast universe seemed to have been transformed into one huge temple of idols? Who does not shudder over the long array of heathen deities imagined, represented, worshipped only in order to make the august name of God contemptible? Who does not see in this prodigious number of false divinities the strange revolt of our nature, which, like a faithless wife forsaking her real husband, abandoned itself to an infinity of adulteries? For it is most certain that idolatry left nothing untainted upon earth; it was the crime of the whole world; and although God had reserved for Himself a small remnant in Judea, yet we know that even those people, the only ones in all the habitable globe who were instructed in the true religion, were so strongly impelled to forsake their God that neither His miracles, most amazing and most apparent though they were, nor His promises, magnificent beyond comparison, nor His chastisements, although so severe and appalling, were capable of restraining their passionate longing to embrace idolatry. So true is it that the human race owing to its corrupt origin has become naturally inclined to despise God, we see that it is so by this world-wide experience. And whence comes this natural inclination so contrary to man's original trend of thought and action, if not from the contagion of that first sin by which, the very well-springs of humanity being infected, corruption became our second nature? *

*"All satirists, of course, work in the direction of Christian doctrine, by the support they give to the doctrine of original sin, making a sort of meanness and badness a law of society."—Canon J. B. Mozley, *Letters*, 333.

"The world as Machiavelli saw it, without a conscience, is the real world of history as it is."—Hartwig.

Ah! do not let us be afraid to confess our infirmities simply and honestly; let those blush for them who are ignorant of the remedy, who do not know the Deliverer.† As for us, do not let us shrink from laying bare our wounds and scars; let us own all the weakness, the languor, the caducity of our nature; nay, of what use would it be to deny what is so evident? Even if we tried to dissimulate and to conceal it, would not our whole life cry out against us? do not even our ordinary occupations show what is the natural bent of our desires and inclinations? Why do all philosophers agree that the path of vice is slippery? How is it that we know by experience that we not only naturally and of ourselves turn into it, but that we seem actually to be dragged into it; whereas if we would climb to those serene heights on which virtue has set up her throne, we must make a desperate effort, gather up all our powers of mind and body, and nerve ourselves for a struggle and a

†"There is a sentiment, noble and beautiful in itself, which has been much and often appealed to throughout all the perturbations and convulsions of society in France; this sentiment is enthusiasm for mankind—the enthusiasm of confidence, sympathy, and hope. This feeling reigned supreme among us in 1789, and gave its resistless impulse to that epoch. There was no virtue that was not ascribed to man—no success that was not hoped and predicted for him. Faith and hope in man took the place of faith and hope in God. The trial was not long deferred. The idol did not long retain its power. Confidence was soon convicted of presumption, and sympathy ended in social war and the scaffold. The hopes that were fulfilled appeared insignificant, compared with those that had vanished like dreams. Never did experience advance with such rapid strides to confront and overthrow pride."—Guizot, *Democracy in France.*

"The natural man, whom the French Revolution discovered and brought to the surface, is, according to Taine, a vicious and destructive brute, not to be tolerated unless caught young, and perseveringly disciplined and controlled."—Lord Acton, *The French Revolution.*

conflict in which only incredible efforts can gain the victory? Knowing this as we do, is it difficult to recognise the tendency of our natural, our dominant inclinations? Do we not see too plainly that we turn instinctively to evil, that it requires an effort, and no ordinary one, to draw back and to extricate ourselves from its toils? This is why the teaching of the Gospel which can only nourish the understanding, has scarcely any hold upon our soul, whereas the things of the senses make so deep an impression upon it. I appeal to your consciences in this matter. Sometimes, when you are listening to an eloquent discourse on the mysteries of the Kingdom of God, do you not feel the fire of enthusiasm and zeal glowing within you? You form great designs, noble plans and aims fill your minds. And yet, when the moment comes for putting these projected works into execution, is it not true that one breath of the Evil One puts out that flickering fugitive flame, before it has set light to the fuel of our poor desires? Alas! so it is; we feel within us indeed some instinct—I scarcely know how to define it—which seems to us to be striving to lift us up to God, but we also feel a whole torrent of earthly desires, which with their opposing forces sweep us along with them and carry us away captive. Hence the sighs and lamentations of St. Paul (Rom. vii. 23) and of all the true servants of God, who complain that they are in captivity, and that in spite of all their good desires they constantly experience in themselves a certain resistance to the laws of God, which resistance constrains and torments them. Which among us, then, seeing even the great Apostle so vigorously assailed and so much distressed by this conflict between the powers of good

and of evil at war within him; which of us (I say) would not be ready, casting away all pride and self-esteem, to confess before God, in the humiliation of his soul, that in truth our malady is a grievous one and that the wounds of this our fallen nature are deep and festering?

I know that the pride of this world's wisdom cannot relish the humiliating teaching of Christianity. Nature, feeble and impotent though she is, has never been without flatterers who have puffed her up with their idle praises because they really have seen in her something worthy of admiration. Yes, they have seen this, but they have failed to see that the things which excite their admiration are only the poor remains of bygone splendour, the ruins of a once magnificent edifice, now overthrown, defaced, crumbling, yet still retaining some vestiges of its former beauty and of the skill and marvellous power of its great Architect. Thus we still see in our human nature, diseased, feeble, maimed and halting though it is, some traces of its original beauty; and human wisdom, wishing to deceive itself by this show of excellence, although perfectly aware of every defect and blemish, would rather cover up by pride the ugly scars than heal them by humility. I am willing to own that the majority of men are unconscious of this struggle and resistance which goes on within them; but then how many sick people there are who do not know what a deadly disease is lurking in their veins. This is really the most dangerous effect of our souls' diseases, that we are reduced to concealments, and even to persuading ourselves in our insane pride that we are in excellent health. Yes, this is indeed my most grievous sickness and infirmity, that

I know not how to deplore my misery nor how to implore the succour of the Divine Deliverer, feeble and yet arrogant as I am, impotent and yet presumptuous.

Moreover, I am not surprised that, living as we do, we should be unconscious of the perpetual war which concupiscence carries on within us. If in swimming you follow the course of the river you feel that nothing could be gentler or more pleasant; but if you turn and swim against the current, then it is that you become aware how rapid it is, how strong, how difficult it is to make any headway in this opposite direction. Therefore it is that I do not wonder if you, leading a careless slothful life, making no effort to reach Heaven, never thinking of trying to rise above your earthly suroundings so as in some degree even here below to taste the joys of the supernatural life, if you (I say) should be unconscious of the resistance brought to bear upon you by concupiscence; you do not feel it because it is carrying you along with it; you are pursuing the same path and at the same pace, closely linked together; its impetuosity, its rapid unhesitating motions are therefore imperceptible to you.

Ah! but a St. Paul will feel it though you do not; because all his affections are centred in Jesus Christ, all fleshly longings wound and trouble him; because he loves the Saviour's Law, all that is in opposition to that Law makes itself instantly and keenly felt by him. Let us only aspire to Christian perfection; let us only follow Jesus Christ a few steps along the narrow way, and our experience will very soon make us acknowledge our infirmity. It is then that being wearied by the persistent opposition of concupiscence,

we shall confess that our strength fails us if Divine grace does not support us. For, after all, it is no human work to conquer this domestic foe who prosecutes us so relentlessly without giving us a moment's respite. Being thus torn and lacerated in ourselves we are actually worn out and consumed by our own efforts; the more we flatter ourselves that we can recover and lift up our heads again by the exertion of our own natural vigour, the more we find that vigour waning and dwindling. We may compare ourselves to a poor dying man who would if he could cling to life a little longer, but knows not what to do to better his feeble suffering condition. He thinks he might be a little easier if he left his weary couch and took a few turns in his sick chamber. Even the effort which he makes in rising robs him of his little remaining strength; and struggling to drag his heavy stiffened limbs a few paces, he falls, like a stone, pulseless, motionless, more feeble, more powerless than before. So it is with our wills, if unassisted by grace. Now grace is not the Law; for if it were, Christ would have died in vain, and the great scandal of the Cross would have been usless. This is why the Evangelist says that *the law was given by Moses but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ* (John i. 17). From this I conclude that under the Old Testament all those who were obedient to grace were so through the merits of Jesus Christ and in that respect pertained to Christianity, because neither grace nor justification are by the Law. And therefore, to return to my text, I infer, with the Apostle, that *the letter killeth.*

Let us return to that sick man I was describing for you; that man who is a slave to his lusts which are

his tyrants and masters, powerless for good, holding (as the Council of Orange declares) no belief except in falsehood and sin. What can the Law do for this man since it cannot give him grace? It speaks, commands, thunders in his ears; but of what use is this, seeing that the disease has so deep a seat down in the recesses of his heart? I have no hesitation in saying that unless the Spirit of Grace comes to his aid the Law, imperious, majestic with its fulminations of wrath and its inflexible precepts, will only stun the poor sufferer; it will indeed cow and terrify him, but it would be far better to cure his disease, and that the Law cannot do. What advantage, then, does the Law bring with it? It brings with it the clear knowledge of what evil is;* it lights a torch and holds it up before the sick man, showing him the way of life; it says to him: *Do this and thou shalt live* (Luke x. 28). But of what use is it to say this to the poor paralytic who has been bedridden for thirty-eight years? of what use to show him the miraculous pool whose waters could cure him? *I have no man* (John v. 7), he says sorrowfully; he must be carried, and it is impossible for the Law to carry him.

But, you will say, has the Law then no energy? Assuredly it has; and its energy is very great, but very pernicious to our sick man. It increases knowledge, and that increased knowledge increases the heinousness of his sin: it lays commands upon me as with the voice of God, it makes me comprehend His judgments. Before the Law came I did not

* "The Gospel fastens the sense of evil upon the mind; a Christian is enlightened, hardened, sharpened, as to evil; he sees it where others do not."—Canon J. B. Mozley, *Essays, I.*, 308.

know, fully and with certainty, that God was my Judge, nor that He had taken upon Himself the office of an avenger of sin.* Now the Law shows me very plainly that He is our Judge, since He condescends to be our Legislator. But what results from this knowledge? My sin becomes more inexcusable, my rebellion an act of still greater audacity. This is why St. Paul tells us that *by the Law sin has abounded* (Rom. v. 20), that it gives sin new strength, that it revives sin (Rom. vii. 9); because to all other sins it adds that of formal disobedience, which is the acme of all evils. What, then, does the Law do? It binds transgressors in the chains of eternal maledictions; for in that same Law it is written: *Cursed is he who observes not that which is commanded in this book* (Deut. xxvii. 26).

Now, do you not see clearly the full force of the Apostle's reasoning? For the Law only touching us externally has no power to heal our inward wounds and relieve our maladies; and yet, proceeding as it does from the mouth of God, it has power to condemn us. The Law, then, considered from this point of view, is nothing but a letter, which gives no support to weakness, but which condemns rebellion; which (as says St. Augustine) affords no relief to the sick, but bears witness against the sinner.

It is well that we should make our sick man fully aware of the extremity of his disease, so that he may the better estimate the infinite mercy of his Physician. We have said that our greatest evil is pride. What does the commandment do for a proud man? It only makes him more obstinate and persistent in

*Cf. Joseph Rickaby, S.J., *Moral Philosophy*, 3rd edition, chap. ix., sect. iii., 7.

holding the opposite course to that prescribed, just as a stream which has overflowed its banks is chafed and irritated by every obstacle that comes in its way. And why is this? Because a proud man values nothing so much as his liberty, and shrinks from nothing so persistently as from dependence. This is why he delights in shaking off the yoke of the Law; he loves licence because it seems to him like the very overflow and riot of liberty. Our soul then being restless, indocile, impatient, to attempt to restrain it by discipline would only be to drive it to an extremity of revolt. Let us confess the truth: we find a certain sweetness in those things that are forbidden us. The man who during the fast of Lent finds flesh food more delicious than ever, really cared probably very little for it before! Prohibition excites our appetites, and therefore creates a new enjoyment; and how can we explain the cause of this enjoyment except by remembering how delightful an outbreak of disobedient, lawless liberty is to a proud man, to whom, as says St. Augustine, "the thing on which he has set his affections is all the dearer the less he is permitted to enjoy it?" And this too is the meaning of St. Paul's words: *Sin, taking occasion by the commandment, seduced me, and by it killed me* (Rom. vii. 11). Yes, it seduced me by that false sweetness which is born of prohibition. True, it is false, it is vain, but yet it is most fascinating to a proud soul and therefore most seductive. Thus we see that the Law by its prohibitions increases the pleasure of wrong-doing, and by that means stirs up concupiscence within me; concupiscence brings with it death: and therefore the Law kills me, not indeed by its own hand, but by the deadly poison of the sin

which through the prohibitions of the Law gains a mastery over me. Thus concupiscence has become by the commandment an even more abundant source of sin, *that sin by the commandment might become sinful above measure* (Rom. vii. 13).

Now, is it not clear as daylight that not only the precepts of the Decalogue, but also by an infallible consequence all the teaching of the Law, and even of the Gospel itself, are (unless we are aided by the Spirit) a letter which kills, which stimulates concupiscence by prohibition, and fills up the measure of sin by transgression? Where, then, is the utility of the Law? Ah! it is just at this point that we must pause to gather up the fruit of the Apostle's wise teaching. Do not let us for a moment imagine that he would have debated with us so subtle a doctrine after the manner of the rhetoricians. No; St. Augustine says that the Apostle wished to show men how extreme was their incapacity, how deplorable their infirmity, since a law so just and so holy became to them a deadly poison; in order that we should humbly acknowledge that it is not enough that God should teach us, but that it is also absolutely necessary that He should help and succour us. Listen again to the great Apostle of the Gentiles, who, after having said all that I have been repeating to you about the Law, breaks out into this passionate lament over his own state of bondage: *I delight in the law of God, after the inward man, but I see another law within me, fighting against the law of my mind and leading me captive under the law of sin; for the good which I will I do not, but the evil which I hate, that I do. Unhappy man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death? The grace of God by*

Jesus Christ our Lord (Rom. vii. 15-25). Here is the conclusion of the whole matter, here is the answer to our questioning, here is the solution of our difficulties. Our weakness, our impotence, our spiritual paralysis, must lead us to this Divine grace. The Law only points out to us what we should ask of God and for what we have to thank Him; and this it is which makes St. Augustine exclaim: "Do thus, O Lord! do thus, O merciful Lord! Command what cannot be accomplished, or rather command what can only be accomplished by Thy grace; so that all may bow down before Thee and seek Thy grace, and that he who glories may glory only in our Lord."

This is the true justification which does not come to us of ourselves, but is given to us by the Holy Ghost; this is that justification which is through faith, of which St. Paul speaks so highly, not as it is understood by our Protestant adversaries who say that all the virtue of justification lies in faith only. They have not grasped the meaning of the Apostle, as I will prove to you in a few words. *If*, says St. Paul, *I should have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing* (1 Cor. xiii. 2). Now if he is nothing he is not justified; faith, then, does not justify without charity; and yet it is true that it is the faith of Jesus Christ which justifies us, because that faith is not only the foundation, but also the well-spring from which streams down upon us the justice which is ours by grace. "For," as says the great St. Augustine, "what the law commands faith impetrates." The Law says: *Thou shalt not covet* (Rom. xii. 7); faith says, with the Wise Man: *I know, O great and Eternal God, that no man can be continent, unless Thou*

givest him the grace so to be (Wisdom viii. 21). God says in the Law: "Do what I command"; faith replies: "Give, O Lord, that which Thou commandest." Faith produces humility, and humility attracts grace; and *it is grace which justifies* (Titus iii. 7). Thus our justification is brought about through faith; faith is its beginning and root; and in that respect we differ from those carnal-minded people who only considered what actions the Law commanded, without paying any attention to the principle from which they sprang. When they read the Law they thought of nothing but of doing what it bade them do, giving no heed whatever to the important consideration of first asking for what they needed to enable them to do these things. As for us, we do indeed listen to the commands of God; but faith in Jesus Christ teaches us that it is from God Himself that we must expect the fulfilment of these commands. Thus, our justice does not proceed from works, in so far as they are done in our own strength; it is born of faith which, *working by charity, is fruitful in good works*, as the Apostle tells us (Gal. v. 6; Col. i. 10).

Indeed, is not belief in Jesus Christ belief in a Saviour, in a Deliverer? and if we believe in the Deliverer, does not that prove that we are conscious of our bondage? if we confess the Saviour do we not at the same time confess our lost condition? Thus, acknowledging before God that of ourselves we are lost, we hasten by faith to Jesus Christ, seeking salvation in Him only. This is the faith which justifies us: to believe and to confess that we are dead and that it is Jesus Christ Who restores life to us. Do you believe like this? is this indeed the faith of all of us who call ourselves Christians? If you do not

so believe, then you deny Jesus Christ as your Saviour, then for you Jesus is no longer Jesus, then all the virtue of His Cross ceases to be. But if we confess this truth, which is not an individual article of faith, but the foundation and basis of the whole fabric of Christianity, with what humility, with what ardour, with what perseverance ought we not to approach Almighty God, to render thanks for all that we have, and to ask for all that we need! If these words of mine have engraved deeply, ineffaceably upon your souls the necessity for Christian humility, self-renunciation, hope in the Deliverer, perseverance in reverent, submissive prayer, then indeed I shall be content. Let us pray always, ardently, unweariedly; let us learn from the Law how much need we have of grace. Let us listen to the words of the holy Council of Trent, which assures us that "God in giving us His Commandments warns us to do what we can, and to ask for what we need to enable us to do what we cannot do of ourselves." We must understand from this teaching that there are some things which we are able to do, and others which we cannot possibly do, and if we do not ask for help to do these things, it will not be given to us. Thus we shall remain powerless, and our powerlessness will not excuse our sin; on the contrary we shall be doubly guilty, because we shall have fallen into the deadly error of not desiring the gift of grace. How absolutely necessary it is, then, that we should pray, and pray with all the fervent persistence of the beggar who can only live by the help of the charitable.* This is what St. Paul would have us understand in the passage which I have been

* "Our prayer is not directed to change God's intention; but

trying to explain to you. He shows us our servitude and our feebleness, nay, more, our impotence and incapacity, in order that, being terrified by the menaces of the letter which kills, we may have recourse by prayer to the Spirit Who gives us life.

The Spirit which Quickens.

St. Paul, having taught us that grace and justice are not by the Law, inasmuch as that only enlightens the mind and is not capable of changing the heart, goes on to say: *But what the Law could not do, God has done Himself, by sending His Son, Who has shed abroad in our souls the spirit of grace, that the justice of the Law might be accomplished in us* (Rom. viii. 3-4); and, as a result of this, he says in another place that *we are now no longer under the Law* (Rom. vi. 14). In order to understand these words more clearly let us consider the beautiful distinction drawn by St. Augustine between the two conditions of being *under* the Law, and being *with* the Law. He tells us that these are two entirely different states of things. "For," he says, "the Law by its equity produces two great and important results: it either directs those who obey it, or it makes those who rebel against it punishable. Those who reject the Law are under the Law. Because they may be making vain efforts to wrest themselves from its control it curses them, condemns them, holds them pressed down under the

that what God intends may be obtained by our prayers."—St. Thomas Aquinas.

"Our importunity in praying makes no change in God, but it creates in us such dispositions as God thinks fit to reward."—Bishop T. Wilson.

rigour of its ordinances; and consequently they are under the Law and the Law kills them. On the contrary," continues St. Augustine, " those who fulfil the Law are its friends, they go along with it, because they embrace it, follow it, and love it." Taking those things for granted, it follows that the observers of the Law are not under it as slaves, but are with it as friends. And as in the New Testament the spirit of grace is imparted to us, that spirit by whose aid the Law can be fulfilled, it is quite true that (as the Apostle says) *we are no longer under the Law;* because, if we follow this spirit of grace, the Law ceases to chastise us as our judge, it guides us rather as our rule. Thus, if we are obedient to grace to which we have been called, the Law no longer kills us, but rather gives us that life of which it contains the promise, as it is written: *Do these things and thou shalt live* (Luke x. 28). Hence it follows most evidently that *it is the Spirit which quickens us,* for the reason why the letter kills us is that it only proclaims our condemnation in our ears, a warning threatening cry that may pierce our brain but never reaches our heart. Now, the Spirit acts from within, not from without; it goes to the very source of the malady; it drives out the low desires, the craving for sensual pleasures which hold us captive, and fills the empty space with pure love and deep delight in the eternal joys which grace offers to us; it is this Spirit which makes us friends of the Law, because, conquering all that concupiscence which resists it, the equity of the Law through the influence of the Spirit attracts and draws us. You see, then, that it is through the Spirit that we are the friends of the Law, that we are with it, not under it; and thus it is the Spirit which

quickens us; the more so as it writes within the Law, which kills us when it only thunders in our ears outside the citadel of our hearts.

This is the new covenant of which Jeremiah prophesies: *The time will come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, not according to that which I made with their fathers, but this is the covenant which I will contract with them, I will imprint My law upon their souls and I will write it in their hearts* (Jer. xxxi. 31-33). The meaning of this prophecy is very plain. The first Law touched only the outward man, the second will put forth all its strength in the soul; this is why Almighty God tells us that He wrote the first Law upon stones, but the second He will engrave upon the heart. In short, the first Law, descending like a thunderbolt but striking only from without, did indeed shake the soul with terror, but the second will by love work a change in that soul; and if we want to get to the bottom of this mystery, I would only ask you to consider what effect fear has upon our hearts. It astounds them, it shatters them, it shakes them to their very foundation; but I maintain that it is impossible for it to change them, because the feelings excited by fear are forced and constrained. The wolf just as he is about to spring upon the sheepfold sees shepherds and dogs on their guard; famished though he may be, he will slink away and do no mischief that time, but this does not mean that he is any the less ferocious, any the less greedy for his prey. Or to take another example. You meet a party of highwaymen: if you and your companions chance to be the stronger and the better armed, the highwaymen will accost you with apparent civility,

but all the same they are thieves and desperate ones, and would assuredly rob you if they got the opportunity. Fear, then, stifles the passions; it seems to repress them for a time, but it does not pluck them up by the roots. Clear away this obstacle, remove that dyke, inclination which was only kept back by force will flow on again in its old course with all its old impetuosity; showing most plainly that, though not apparent for a while, it was alive all the time in the secret depths of the heart, bridled but not conquered, held in but not destroyed.

This is why St. Augustine, speaking of those who kept the Law solely out of fear of its penalties, not from love of true justice, pronounces this terrible but most reasonable sentence: "They are none the less criminal because of what they appear to be to their fellow-men. In the sight of God, to Whom the deepest recesses of our hearts lie open, their works which have such fair seeming, having no good-will as their source and motive power, are worth nothing. He sees that they would far rather commit crime if only they could do so with impunity." Thus, according to the teaching of this great Doctor, fear is incapable of changing the heart. Consider for a moment the stone on which God wrote His Laws; has it lost any of its solidity and hardness? was it changed in any way for the reception of those venerable words, those sacred precepts? No, it is easy to see that these were only graven on an outer surface, smooth, firm, impenetrable;—a type or figure by which God would have us understand that it is with our hearts as with a stone; that the Mosaic Law only touches them by fear, that their hardness is not softened by it, that the Law always remains, so

to speak, on the surface of our hearts.* Hence it is that the Council of Trent, speaking of fear of the penalties of the Law, gives us a very clear definition, in contradiction of the teaching of the Lutherans; the Council declares this fear to be "an impress of the Spirit of God," and since it was so well founded on the formidable judgments of God, why should it not come from His Holy Spirit? But the Tridentine Fathers go on to explain themselves more clearly and to tell us that "it is an impress of the Spirit of God Who does not as yet dwell within us but only moves and urges us." Hence it follows indubitably that fear of punishment cannot imprint the Law upon our hearts.

In truth, nothing but charity can soften them. Our disease is attachment to creatures; its cure, its perfect health, must, then, be in attachment to God. A perverse distorted love has maimed, crippled, poisoned us; only a holy Divine love can set us right again: ill-regulated, disorderly passions have led us captive, nothing but a true delight in all that is pure and good can break our chains and make us free; only affection for the one perfect, unchanging happiness† can root out our affection for what are but joys

*Cf. C. G. Montefiore, *Origin and Growth of Religion*, sect. ix.; and Bishop Gore, *The Sermon on the Mount*, chap. i., sect. ii.

†Bossuet ruthlessly exposed the extravagances and illusions of Fénelon's *amie*, Mme. Guyon; and effectively, if somewhat truculently, combated the Semi-Quietism of Fénelon, who, in his *Maxims of the Saints*, taught that to be in a state of perfection here below one must be animated by the pure love of God without any deliberate desire of happiness or fear of punishment, that self must be put entirely out of the question. Fénelon, in his book, retained the name of hope, but not the thing itself.

We can never in this life reach a state of perfection in which acts of hope will not be necessary. Hope and the desire of

in seeming, the fleeting perishable joys of earth; love, and love alone, holds the master-key of the heart. Love, Divine love, then, must dilate our hearts and open them to receive in their inmost depths the dew of Divine grace. Then indeed our souls will be wholly changed; no longer a table of stone written upon from without in characters that do not go below the surface, but a tablet of wax all penetrated and melted by the warmth of a celestial fire.

Now you see what Jeremiah means by the Law engraved in our hearts. Henceforth will there be anything in those hearts but what we would have there? What we love becomes to us a law; and therefore I shall not be wrong if I say that love becomes the law of our hearts; and thus Divine

beatitude are, during our life on earth, compatible with perfect charity. Further, to desire for oneself beatitude in order to God's glory pertains to perfect charity. Cf. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, II-II, qq. 23-29; also F. von Hügel, *The Mystical Element in Religion*, vol. ii., pp. 152 sqq.

The late Bishop J. C. Hedley, O.S.B., wrote: "The doctrine intended by Fénelon, in his *Maximes des Saints*, and as explained by him during his controversy with Bossuet, has never been censured, although the opposite party laboured hard for its condemnation. Fifteen years after the condemnation of his book, we find him restating to Pope Clement XI. (who, as Cardinal, had drawn up the brief of his condemnation) in careful scholastic language the doctrine intended by himself, but which he himself had misstated in his popular treatise. As there were errors, the other side, whatever the crudity or novelty of some of its contentions, whatever its motives or methods—and some of them were far from creditable—was sure in the end to succeed. And it is well that it should have succeeded as far as it did succeed."

"Theologians remark," writes the Rev. H. C. Semple, S.J., in the *American Ecclesiastical Review*, "that to make an act of love or perfect contrition and be justified we must have not only faith in God, but also hope in Him; that we *would* not love God good in Himself, if we did not believe in Him and hope in Him as also good and loving to us; that we *could* not love God with charity, which is friendship and mutual love, unless we knew and believed God to be a reward to those that seek Him."

love ought to be the law of the heirs of the New Covenant, because they ought to carry their law in their hearts. The ancient Law was written upon stone; nothing is more motionless than that; it is therefore a dead, inanimate law. We must have a living Law; and what can this living Law be but the living love of the one sovereign good, which the finger of God, that is, His Holy Spirit, writes and imprints in the depths of our souls, when He sheds forth into them the unction of charity? *The charity of God*, says St. Paul, *is poured forth into our hearts by the Holy Ghost Who is given to us* (Rom. v. 5). Charity is, then, that living law which governs us and stirs us inwardly; and this is why the Spirit quickens us, because He imprints in our souls a living Law which is the Law of the New Covenant, that is to say, the Law of the love of God. Consequently who could doubt for a moment that charity is the spirit of the New Law and the soul (so to speak) of Christianity, since it was predicted so long before the Birth of Jesus Christ that the children of the New Covenant should have the Law engraved in their hearts by the inspiration of Divine love?

As a natural consequence or result of these principles, in which I have simply followed out the lines laid down by St. Augustine, the diligent exponent of St. Paul's doctrine, I have no hesitation in saying that anyone who only submits himself to the Law out of fear of its penalties, cuts himself off from Christianity and returns to the letter which kills and to the captivity of the Synagogue. To convince you of this truth, I ask you in the first place to consider for a moment who and what we are; are we children or servants? If God treats you as servants, then be

contented with serving Him as a Master; but if He sends you His own Son to tell you that He condescends to adopt you as His children, can you not love your Father? Now St. Paul teaches us that *we have not received the spirit of bondage in fear, but that God has given us the spirit of the adoption of children, whereby we call Him Father* (Rom. viii. 15). How, then, can we call Him (as we do daily) our Father, if we deny Him our love? Moreover, let us consider in what manner He has adopted us; was it by constraint or by love? Ah! we know well that it was by love and by an infinite love. *God so loved the world*, says our Lord, *that He gave His only-begotten Son that He might save it* (John iii. 16). If, then, our God has loved us so much, how can we hope to repay His love, except by loving Him in return? "And the more so," says St. Bernard, "because love is the only thing in which we are capable of imitating God. He judges us, we do not judge Him; He gives to us, He has no need of our gifts; if He commands we ought to obey; if He is displeased with us we ought to tremble; and if He loves us, what ought we to do? We ought to love Him: that is the only thing which we can do in regard to Him." And indeed how criminal are those children who do not wish to imitate so good a Father!

Should we stop short at considering God as a Father? No; let us now consider Him as a Sovereign. As a King He commands us, but there is no command which He lays upon us so strenuously as that of loving: *Thou shalt love*, He says, *the Lord thy God, with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole strength* (Deut. vi. 5). Has Almighty God ever spoken with greater energy? And

what does our Divine Lord say? *He that loveth Me not, keepeth not My words* (John xiv. 24). He, then, who loves not Jesus Christ, since he does not keep His commandments, violates the majesty of his King.

Shall we speak now of the gifts which God bestows upon His servants, and from the quality of which we judge of the love which He requires of us in return for them? What is the one great gift which God gives to us? It is the Holy Ghost. And what is the Holy Ghost? What but the eternal love of the Father and the Son? What is the peculiar work of the Holy Ghost? Is it not to create, to inspire love in our hearts, and to shed forth in them charity; and consequently whoever despises charity rejects the Holy Ghost? And yet it is the Holy Ghost Who quickens us. Truly this is an inexhaustible subject; were I to pursue it, the inductions which I should draw from it would be endless. There is not a mystery of Christianity, there is not an article of the Creed, there is not a petition in the Lord's Prayer, there is not a syllable in the Gospel, which does not cry to us that we must love God.

This God made Man, this Word Incarnate, what did He come down into the world to do? With what pomp or display did He begin His teaching? Did He descend from Heaven wrapt in clouds and mystery? Did thunder and lightning, a smoking mountain, a voice like the trump of doom, proclaim His Majesty? —a voice uttering these terrible words: *Depart; let none but My servant Moses draw near; every man and every beast approaching the mountain shall die the death* (Exod. xix. 12, 13)? The Mosaic Law was given with this awful solemnity, this fearful restriction. How great a difference in the Gospel cere-

monial! how great a change in the language which the Eternal God now addresses to us! Could anything be gentler, kinder, more encouraging than the dealings of our Divine Lord with us His poor suppliants? He sends none away from Him; nay, not only does He endure the presence of the greatest sinners, but He calls them to Him, He goes out to meet them: *Come to Me*, He says, *and fear not; come to Me, all who are heavy-laden, and I will help you to bear your burdens* (Matt. xi. 29); come, all you who are sick, and I will cure you; come, you who are hungry, and I will feed you; come, publicans and sinners, draw near to Me, I am your Deliverer.

And what, think you, is the explanation of this change? Why this loving condescension of a God Who thus familiarizes Himself with us? Is it not evident, even to our dull minds, that He desires to banish servile fear; and that He is resolved at whatever price, even (dare I say it?) at the expense of His own greatness, to make Himself loved? Tell me, was it to make Himself feared that by His own will He hung upon the Cross? Was it not rather that He might extend His arms to us, and open to us in every one of His Sacred Wounds a well-spring of love? Why does He give Himself to us in the Blessed Eucharist, if not to show us in a very ecstasy of love the burning fervour of His Divine Heart when He deigns thus to unite Himself to us? Does it not seem as though, unable to endure our coldness, our indifference, our disloyalty, He would by His own Presence light up in our lifeless hearts the fire of Divine love? But how, then, shall we excuse our negligence? What cloak can we find to cover and to hide our ingratitude? May we not well exclaim

with St. Paul: *If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema* (1 Cor. xvi. 22)—a sentence as just as it is terrible? Yes, truly, he that loves not Jesus Christ ought to be accursed; the earth should open beneath him, and bury him alive in Hell's deepest dungeon; the heavens should be as brass above him; all living creatures should with one voice declare war against him, the traitor, the rebel, the base ingrate who loves not our Divine Redeemer.

But, alas! terrible as it is that I should have to say so, it is we ourselves who are the traitors, the rebels, the ingrates! Can we dare to say that we love our Lord? Jesus Christ is no mortal man whom we can deceive. He looks down into the deepest depths of our hearts and sees there no love for Him. When you love any human being, do you for the merest trifle, the most unimportant reason, break with him? do you scorn and trample under foot every thing that he gives you? do you grudge him every moment of your time, thoughts, words? There is no living man whom you would treat thus; and yet this is the way in which you treat the Divine Lord! He has bound you to Himself by the closest ties of friendship, you continually violate them; He gives you His Sacred Body, you profane It; you have pledged your faith to Him, you break your pledge again and again; He entreats you to love your enemies, you refuse to do it; He commends His poor to you, you despise them; there is not a member of His Divine Body that your blasphemies do not dishonour. How, then, can you escape the Apostle's terrible but most just excommunication: *If any man love not our Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema?*

Ah! and how can I myself escape it, ungrateful, shameless sinner that I am? O Almighty and Eternal God, Who rulest all hearts as it pleases Thee, if any one of us loves not our Lord Jesus Christ, grant him Thy grace that he may love Him.

Yes, let us love God with our whole heart! We are not Christians if we do not at least strive to love Him, if we do not at least desire to have this love, if we do not fervently ask for it of that Divine Spirit Who quickens us. I would not say that we are compelled under pain of eternal damnation to attain to the perfection of charity.* No, we are poor sinners; the Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ will atone before God for our faults, provided that we do penance for them. I do not (I repeat) tell you that we are obliged to have the perfection of charity; but I do tell you most emphatically that we are bound to aim at it, to tend towards it, according to the measure of grace given to us, and that if we do not do this we are not Christians. Charity is of the very essence of Christianity;† when you refine your charity, you

*Cf. St. Bernard, *On the Love of God*, English trans. by E. G. Gardner, Litt.D. (London, 1915), chap. xi.; also St. Francis de Sales, *On the Love of God*, English trans. by Canon Knox Little (London, 1902), book iii., chap. i., and book x., chaps. i.-ii.

† "Alexander, Cæsar, Charlemagne, and I myself have founded great empires; but on what did these creations of our genius depend? Upon force. Jesus alone founded His empire upon love, and to this day millions would die for Him."—NAPOLEON.

"There is One Man Whose tomb is guarded by love; One Man Whose grave is not only glorious, but beloved; there is One Man, and One only, Who has for ever established His love upon earth, and that Man is Thyself, O Jesus."—LACORDAIRE.

"You say it is hard to suffer. No, it is easy; it is happiness. Only we must love what we suffer, and suffer whilst we love. On the way of the cross, you see, my children, only the first step is painful. Our greatest cross is the fear of crosses."—*The Curé d'Ars.*

"The mother watching by the side of her sick child would

are preparing pure gold for the adornment of Heaven. St. Paul tells us that only charity will endure in Heaven: Faith will give place to the vision of God; to Hope will succeed fruition; but *Charity never falls away* (1 Cor. xiii. 8). Not only is it crowned like Faith and Hope, but it is itself their crown. Charity alone is worthy of Heaven, worthy of the glory of Paradise; it alone will be reserved to shine as pure gold before God eternally, it alone will be reserved to burn eternally before God as a holocaust of the sweetest odour. Let us begin to love on earth, since we shall never cease to love in Heaven; let us begin to practise charity in this world, so that one day it may be consummated in its eternal abiding-place in the courts of Heaven.

shrink from the thought that she is doing what duty bids; duty is swallowed in love. The Saviour spoke not of duty, but of love; and millions of hearts respond to His appeal, for hundreds who are swayed by the cold and imperative command of duty."—BISHOP J. L. SPALDING.

"The commandment of Love is the final law of the universe, although everything in nature and in man seems to disprove it. Love is the sole law which should govern the moral world. It is a doctrine difficult to believe, as the law is difficult to practise; but the law is final. It is the last word that has been uttered by Divine and human philosophy."—REV. CANON P. A. SHEEHAN.

V

WHIT SUNDAY

THE TRUE SPIRIT OF CHRISTIANITY

By Bossuet

"Extinguish not the spirit" (1 Thess. v. 19).

We must, as we ponder these words, try to sound the full depth of the Apostle's meaning; and in order to do this I would remind you that Christianity has two great obligations, which are imposed upon us by Jesus Christ. In the first place, He demands of His disciples that they should engage in warfare, and in warfare the sternest and deadliest possible; secondly, that they should practise, cultivate, and maintain a holy and divine peace. He prepares them for warfare, when He warns them that all men will oppose and resist them; this is why He requires of them that they should be combative and violent. And He makes peace an absolute obligation, when He commands them to be (in spite of all contradictions) peaceable. He prepares them for war, when He sends them forth *in the midst of wolves* (Matt. x. 16); and He makes peace obligatory, when He desires them to be *as sheep* (Matt. x. 16). He prepares them for war,

when He says in His Gospel that He *came not to send peace but the sword*, meaning that He was throwing down a sword among the people of the world as a signal of combat; and He, so to speak, binds them over to keep the peace, when He promises to kindle a fire which shall be the source and principle of charity: *I am come to cast fire on earth* (Luke xii. 49). There is, then, a holy war which is to be waged against the world, and there is a peace of Christianity which is to unite us to one another in our Divine Lord. In order to sustain protracted and desperate conflict we need a spirit of strength; and in order to maintain this peace the spirit of charity is necessary to us: that is why St. Paul teaches us that *God has not given us a spirit of fear, but a spirit of power and of love* (2 Tim. i. 7); and such was the spirit of Christianity with which the Apostles were filled.

Christian Strength.

We may, then, assert, as a first principle, that Christians ought to be strong, and that the spirit of Christianity is a spirit of strength and firmness. This is indisputable; for if in history we see that nations prided themselves on their warlike character and qualities, because from their earliest youth the individuals composing those nations had been trained for war, made hardy by labour, and inured to dangers, how much more ought we to be strong, we who from our infancy have been enrolled by holy Baptism in a spiritual army, we whose whole life is temptation, we whose daily exercise is conflict, we who in the midst of the world are, as on a vast battle-field, exposed to the attacks of a thousand enemies, visible

and invisible? Encompassed as we are by so many difficulties and in many perils, ought we not to be nourished and sustained by a spirit of strength and stability, so as to be always unmovable in spite of the pleasures which tempt us, the afflictions which scourge us, the storms which sweep over us? We see too in the Scriptures that God, foreseeing the conflicts in which it was His will that His faithful ones should be engaged, commands them to wait in quiet inactivity and seclusion until He shall have armed them with strength: *Stay you in the city, till you be endued with power from on high* (Luke xxiv. 49),—showing them by these words that in order to stand their ground against the desperate attacks of their enemies in this world the children of God need an extraordinary, a supernatural supply of strength and stability.

This consideration it is which impels me to bring before your notice three fundamental maxims of Christian generosity which you will see practised in the history of primitive Christianity and in the conduct of those Apostles on whom, on the first Christian Pentecost, the Holy Ghost descended, filling their souls with all power and wisdom. These are the maxims, and I ask you to imprint them upon your heart and memory. First, to despise all the gifts of this world, its riches, its honours, its pleasures. But, because by refusing the world's proffered gifts we infallibly incur its displeasure and odium, the second maxim is, not only to despise its favours but even to despise its hatred and not to fear displeasing it. And, as its hatred being despised turns at once into the most implacable fury, the third maxim is, not only to despise its hatred, but even its rage, its threats,

and so by a last supreme effort to put ourselves beyond and above the reach of every evil which the most extravagant, outrageous fury can inflict upon our innocence.

The first maxim of strength, given to us by Christianity, is (as we have said) to despise the world's gifts; and the reason of this is evident, for it is an indubitable principle that our esteem or our contempt depends upon the ideas which fill our minds and the hopes which these ideas give us. What, then, are the ideas with which the spirit of Christianity fills our minds, and what are the hopes which that spirit gives us? St. Paul answers this question in these words written to the Corinthians: *We have received not the spirit of this world* (1 Cor. ii. 12),—words from which we naturally conclude that the true Christian is not filled with the ideas of this world. What spirit, then, have we received? St. Paul tells us: *The spirit which is of God;* and he adds, as the reason for this, *that we may know the things that are given us from God* (1 Cor. ii. 12). What, then, are these things which are given us by God? The adoption of sons, equality with the angels, the inheritance of Jesus Christ, the communication of His glory, a promised place near His Throne. These, then, are the ideas which the Holy Ghost imprints upon our souls. He engraves upon them the idea of an eternal blessedness, of a treasure which is not to be lost, of a life which never ends, of a peace unchangeable and enduring. If my mind is full of these great matters, wholly occupied with hopes so lofty and sublime, can I possibly attach any value to the gifts of this poor world? For, what, O world of time and sense, what have you to offer that can be compared to those

infinite, those inestimable blessings? Pleasures?—but will they be pure? Honours?—will they be substantial? Favour?—is it lasting? Fortune?—is it secure? A great estate?—are you able to insure or guarantee my undisturbed enjoyment of it? can you endow me with the gift of immortality so that I may possess these blessings, undisturbed by any anxieties? Who does not know that all this is impossible? The fashion of this world passes away; all that men value in it is but folly and illusion; and the spirit of grace which I have received, filling my soul as it does with glorious pictures of the eternal goods which are bestowed upon me, has raised me far above and beyond this present world, so that its gifts henceforth are nothing to me. Such is the first maxim of Christian generosity.

But that is not enough. If you do not love the world, it will hate you; those who despise the world's favours will infallibly incur its displeasure; and you must either bind yourself to it by accepting its offered benefits, or openly break with it, fearless of incurring its displeasure. This is the second maxim of the spirit of Christianity. For it is a most unvarying truth that men will never achieve anything worthy of the Gospel and of the spirit of the New Law, as long as they have not the courage to renounce all self-complacency and to make up their minds to bear the contempt, disfavour, dislike of their fellow-men. Consider indeed for a moment the tyrannical and pernicious laws the world imposes upon us in contravention of the obligations of our Baptism. Does not the world tell us that forgiveness of injuries is a weakness and that the curbing of ambition is cowardice? Is it not the world which encourages the

young to indulge in every sort of idle folly and self-indulgence, while it urges those of more advanced years to give all their time and thoughts to the acquisition of money, position, all that self-interest craves to the very end of life? Is not self-advancement by any road (straight if possible, but if not, by any path, crooked, evil, even depraved) one of the world's laws? And why are such laws and precepts obeyed? whence comes the authority which they have so universally acquired? from reason? or from justice? But Jesus Christ condemned them and shed every drop of His most Precious Blood to deliver us from their bondage! How comes it, then, that these accursed laws still reign throughout the world, in opposition to the teaching of the Gospel? I do not hesitate to assert that it is the fear of displeasing men which gives them this authority.

But you may perhaps consider that all this evil must not be imputed to the effect of self-love only; that our other corrupt inclinations must have their share in the blame. No, that is not so; I bring my accusation against that one miserable infirmity only; for, although I am quite ready to admit that our evil inclinations lead us into evil habits and practices, yet I deny that it is those inclinations which give to those habits and practices the strength of laws which we dare not defy. What raises them to the dignity and power of laws, and what constrains us by a sort of necessity to obey them, is the tyranny of self-love; because we are ashamed to stand alone, because we cannot venture to deviate from the beaten track, because we are afraid of displeasing men, and the only reason which we can give for this conduct is that this is the way of the world, that we must do as

others do. And as regards these accursed laws which the world formulates in opposition to the laws of Christianity, there must indeed be someone to propose them and someone to second the proposal, and it is true that our inclinations do both the one and the other; but, at the same time, it is the fear of displeasing men which gives these laws their great authority. That is what the divine Apostle foresaw when he gave this warning to the faithful: *You are bought with a price, do not make yourselves the bond-slaves of men* (1 Cor. vii. 23). In fact, do you not feel that you are putting yourself under the yoke when you are afraid of displeasing men and dare not set yourself up in opposition to what they may think and feel, making yourself thus a voluntary slave to the errors of others?

Christians, this is not our spirit, it is not the spirit of Christianity. Listen to what St. Paul says with so much power and authority: *We have not received the spirit of this world* (1 Cor. ii. 12). I do not think I am wrong in saying that the spirit of this world of which the Apostle here speaks is that self-love and human respect which corrupt the noblest souls, and which by undermining the poor remains of our tottering virtue make us participators in so many sins, not so much from inclination as from the pressure of example and the influence of our surroundings, which rob us of that invincible strength with which our Baptism endued us, and make us so timid, shrinking, cowardly, that we are ashamed even in the service of a Divine Master to displease men. Ah, my dearest Saviour, that is not the spirit which on the feast of Pentecost Thou didst send down upon us: *We have received not the spirit of this world but the spirit*

which is of God (1 Cor. ii. 12). No, we have not received the spirit of this world which makes us the slaves of men; but our spirit coming from God Himself raises us above and beyond their judgments, making us despise their hatred. That is the second maxim of the generosity of Christianity.

We must however rise to even sublimer heights; and this third maxim which still remains to be considered will stir all our senses and fill us with trembling awe and wonder, for it is that which prompted the passionate cry of the great Apostle: *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation? or distress? or famine? or nakedness? or danger? or persecution? or the sword? But in all these things we overcome, because of Him Who hath loved us* (Rom. viii. 35). Therefore, let the world rage and threaten, let it kindle the fires of persecution in all the corners of the earth; no matter, Christian generosity will rise triumphant above all its impotent fury; and we know the cause of so glorious a victory. St. John teaches us that when he says: *Greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world* (1 John iv. 4). Yes, *greater* because He that is in us is the Holy Ghost Whom God has shed forth into our hearts. And who does not know that this almighty Spirit is infinitely greater than the world; consequently that whatever that world may attempt, whatever evil forces it may bring to bear upon the faithful, all will be of no avail; the stronger will never yield to the weaker? The generous Christian will rise superior to all that the world can do to harm him, because he is filled with a spirit which is above and beyond that world.

Those, then, are the thoughts, vigorous and ani-

mating, which through long ages of persecution and opposition have supported the Church. In the course of the early ages what has she not seen! a whole Empire conspiring against her, the sentence of death set up against her faithful children in every market place, on every wayside signpost; yet she has never been afraid. Conscious of the Spirit abiding within her, she has known well how to maintain the glorious right to profess Christianity; and although the laws refused it to her, she gave it to herself by her own blood, for to acquire it by any other means was accounted in her a crime, and no other way remained to her of shaking off the cruel yoke, except that of dying with fortitude and constancy. That is why Tertullian expresses his amazement that in those terrible days of persecution any Christians should be found base enough to purchase life and liberty with money. "What!" he cries, "can it be that the Church is thus brought to shame! that a Christian can save his life by the payment of money! that a Christian can sacrifice his wealth only to escape suffering! Has he forgotten, then, that Jesus Christ poured forth for him all the riches of His most Precious Blood?" Can you not hear Tertullian saying to such an unworthy disciple: "Tell me, Christian, you who wished to save yourself by your gold, where was your blood? had you none in your veins when you went to your money bags to find the shameful price of your liberty? I would have you know that being redeemed by Blood, being delivered by Blood, we do not owe money for our lives, we do not owe money for our liberties; our own blood must preserve for us what the Precious Blood of Jesus Christ merited for us." Those who live in this spirit

are the true Christians, the true successors of those incomparable men who were filled on the feast of Pentecost with the spirit of strength, who in all their actions were guided by those three maxims of which I have been speaking, and whose example we should strive to follow.

Yes, whatever evil may be suggested to us, whatever troubles may befall us, let us be strong in Jesus Christ and in the maxims of His Gospel. Why should they think to intimidate us by the loss of this world's goods? Tertullian says: "Faith knows no such thing as necessity." The world says: "You will lose what you love best." Is it necessary that I should possess it? "Your conduct will displease men." Is it necessary that I should please them? "You will be ruined; you will lose your fortune." Is it necessary that I should keep it? And should one's life even be in peril—though the infinite mercy of God does not often expose our weakness to so severe a test,—even in such a case I repeat that faith knows no such thing as necessity. It is not even necessary that you should live, but it is necessary that you should serve God; and whatever the world may do, whatever the malice and cunning of evil men may devise to harm you, though the very elements may seem to conspire against you, though the heavens grow black above you and the earth totter under your feet, always that eternal unchanging truth will abide, the truth that there can never be any necessity for committing sin.

Those are the maxims of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Let us meditate upon them in all their strength and depth of meaning; let us meditate upon them, and engrave them on our hearts.

Christian Gentleness.

At first sight it might seem as though the spirit of Christianity, while making our forefathers stronger, would at the same time have made them less sensitive, less sympathetic, the very vigour and stability of their minds detracting in a measure from the tenderness of their charity. For, whether it is that these two qualities, gentleness and dauntless courage, depend on temperament; or whether it is that men brought up in the very midst of dangers and threatening calamities, but trained from their infancy to absolute contempt of personal hardships and peril, cannot easily be moved by any other elements of disturbance, by the troubles of States or the griefs of individuals,—however that may be, it is certainly very often the case that these strong characters which have been formed amid all the chances and perils of war acquire in the course of that training a something which is (to say the least) not gentle, sensitive, or sympathetic, which we might even call stern, severe, and phlegmatic.

But it is not so with our genuine Christians. Strong and unflinching they are indeed in suffering and danger, but tender and loving always towards their brethren; and the all-powerful Spirit Who animates them knows well how to harmonize in them every contradiction and anomaly of temperament. This is why we read in the Scriptures that the Holy Ghost forms the faithful out of two very different materials. The one is soft and impressionable, as the Prophet Ezechiel tells us: *Thus saith the Lord God: I will give you a heart of flesh* (Ezec. xxxvi. 26); the other of brass and iron, as Almighty God Himself tells

Jeremiah when He says: *I have made thee as a pillar of iron and a wall of brass* (Jer. i. 18). Is it not most evident that He makes His people of brass, that they may be able to stand firm and unmoved in the midst of all perils; but at the same time He makes them of flesh, that they may be touched, moved, melted by charity? And just as it is with the element of earthly fire which so distributes its virtue that it hardens some things while it softens others, so is it with that heavenly fire which came down upon the faithful on the feast of Pentecost. It hardens and softens, but in a supernatural manner, since those hearts of the disciples which from their unconquerable firmness seemed to be of adamant are the very same hearts which, becoming also human hearts and hearts of flesh, burn and glow with charity and tenderness. This is the effect of that celestial fire which on Pentecost rested upon them. It softens the hearts of the faithful; it has, so to speak, melted them, so that they flow into one another, mingling and losing themselves in each other's very existence by the power of charity, so as to form that marvellous union and unity of heart and soul of which we read in the Acts of the Apostles, where we are told that *the multitude of believers had but one heart and one soul* (Acts iv. 32).

Here indeed I might enlarge upon those sublime principles of theology which teach us that as the Holy Ghost is the eternal bond uniting the Father and the Son, so too it is His function to unite all the faithful to one another; and that, possessing to an infinite extent this power of uniting, He effects their union in a manner far closer, far more intimate than that in which are united the various members of the

individual human body. But taking these sacred truths for granted, I would without any further discussion of the matter remind you of the practical result of this teaching. It is, that since we are firmly persuaded by the Scriptures that we are all one and the same body, being so made by charity, we ought to look upon ourselves, not as ourselves separate and distinct from one another, but as one in heart and soul in the unity of that same body, and therefore as making the welfare of our neighbour the guiding rule of our conduct. In doing this we shall be following the example of the early Church, whose birthday we keep on the festival of Pentecost.

We may notice in the Acts of the Apostles, in which the history of that Church is recorded for us, that two kinds of multitudes are indicated. When the Holy Ghost descended upon the Apostles, the rumour of this marvel brought together a great multitude, confused, tumultuous, some agitated by one thought or conjecture, some by a totally different one. Some cry: "What is this?" Others mockingly declare with shouts of derision: "These men are full of new wine!" Others again with indignant denial protest that "they are not." Truly, a confused multitude. But a little later we see a very different sort of multitude, calm, orderly, united in purpose and conviction, *being of one heart and one soul* (Acts iv. 32). What is the explanation of this great difference? It is this. In that first assembly every individual was self-centred, thinking his own thoughts, following his own impulses; hence their extraordinary diversity, and hence the fact that it was a confused, a tumultuous multitude. But in that multitude of new believers, no one regards himself as a separate indi-

vidual, each considers himself merely as a part of the great body into which he has been enrolled with so many others; a spirit of comradeship, of concord and of peace, pervades this vast society, and it is the spirit of Christianity which makes a well-ordered multitude having but one heart and one soul.*

And who could enumerate all the many and splendid results of this teaching which makes us look upon ourselves not as separate individuals, but as forming part of one another in the unity of the Holy Catholic Church? It would be perhaps impossible; but from their vast number I would select one in particular for your careful consideration, namely, the extermination of two vices which are the chief scourge of Christianity—envy and uncharitableness. The envy which is troubled by the well-being of others; the uncharitableness, or hard-heartedness, which is insensible to their sufferings: the envy which impels us to bring about the ruin of our neighbour; the spirit of self-love which makes us refuse to alleviate his misery by any sacrifice of our own interests.

Now, the malignity of envy cannot possibly disturb a soul conscious of its membership with others in the unity of the Church, because envy is only born in our hearts through a sense of our own want and need;

* "Taine has said, and before him Montesquieu had said it, and I repeat, that certainly it is Christianity that has founded the rights of man."—EMILE FAGUET.

"Homer is not so much the father of all our poetry, nor Socrates so much the master of all our intellectual discipline, as is Christ the fountain-head of the humanitarian love that makes men helpful to the weak and the wronged."—BISHOP J. L. SPALDING.

"The Catholics constitute the most republican and the most democratic class of citizens which exists in the United States."—DE TOCQUEVILLE, *Democracy in America*, vol. i., chap. xvii.

"Catholicism laid the very foundations of modern civilisation."—LECKY, *Rationalism in Europe*.

which sense cannot exist when we realize the infinite riches which are ours in common with all who are one in the unity of the Church. Perhaps you say to yourself: "That person has great graces, extraordinary talents and powers of mind and body." Human nature may and does suggest, even to the best among us, a passing thought of disquietude as this superiority in another seems to diminish our own. But if such an envious and unworthy thought arises, here is the remedy always close at hand. Do not look at yourselves *as* yourselves, it is by doing so that you discover your inferiority and deficiency; do not compare yourselves with others, it is that which makes you feel your inequality with them; but look at yourselves and at others as one in the unity of the body of the Church; in that unity all things are yours, and through the brotherhood of Christianity all goods are in common among the faithful. St. Augustine teaches us that lesson when he says: "Never complain because you are wanting in some gifts and graces; if only you love unity, you will understand that others only have those same gifts for your benefit." If the hand felt as it should feel, it would rejoice in all the eye illumines and makes visible, because the eye does this for the benefit of the whole body; and the eye would not envy the hand its strength or its skill, because they save its own delicate organism from so many shocks and injuries. Look at the Apostles of the Son of God. We find them on one occasion, in the early days of their following their Divine Master, disputing with one another as to which should be the greatest among them; but as soon as the Holy Ghost descends upon them, making them of one heart and one soul, they

are no longer jealous or contentious. They now believe that when St. Peter speaks they all speak by his mouth, that with him they preside over every assembly of the faithful, and that if his shadow passing by heals the sick the whole Church participates in this marvellous gift and glories in it and in the God Who bestows it. "Let us," says St. Augustine, "follow their example; only envy can make us poor, for that alone can deprive us of a share in all the blessings, all the riches of the Church."

But if we have the consolation of participating in our neighbour's good, his happiness, his gifts and graces, our hearts must be hard indeed if they will not feel his sorrows, his needs, his sufferings; and that we do not feel them is a terrible and deplorable blot upon Christianity. Have we ever truly realized that we are all members of one body? Which of us has fainted and languished with the sick? tottered and stumbled with the weak? hungered and thirsted and suffered the want of all things with the poor? When I think of all the calamities that surround us, the poverty, the desolation, the despair of so many ruined households, it seems to me that a cry of misery is rising up to Heaven on every side; a cry which ought to pierce our hearts, and which yet perhaps does not even fall upon our ears! For if it did, surely the rich now so self-absorbed, so hard, so pitiless, would be startled out of their apathy, would retrench some of their extravagances, cut off some of their superfluities, and realize that their luxury is sapping the very life of innocent orphans whose existence was given to them by Divine Providence in dependence on that help which those self-indulgent members of the community deny them.

But you may tell me that there are charitable institutions set on foot and maintained by the Church. Charities? Say, rather, paltry alms, feeble and useless aid proffered to the most dire necessity, which we dole out with a miserly hand, as we might pour one single drop of water upon a mighty conflagration or put one crumb of bread into the mouth of a famished beggar! That is not the way in which charity gives. She gives liberally, because she feels the misery which she is relieving, because she suffers with the suffering, and while giving help to the needy is herself strengthened and satisfied. This was how they lived and acted in those early days which I have been trying to recall to you. When the faithful saw any member of the Church in want and misery, their hearts were instantly and unanimously moved with pity, everyone began to accuse himself, everyone looked upon the distress of this poor afflicted member as a reproach not only to the whole body but to each particular individual composing it.* This was why they threw all their goods into one common stock, so that no one should be to blame for the poverty of one of his neighbours. Ananias, as we read in the Acts of the Apostles, having violated this law which was imposed by charity, was treated as a criminal guilty of theft, although he had only kept back what was his own. Hence it is that St. Chrysostom calls him "the thief of his own goods." As for ourselves, we may well tremble and fear lest having sinned as he sinned, we should incur the same punishment.

Nor can we venture to shelter ourselves under the

* "It is incredible how ardently the people of the Christian religion help one another in their wants. They spare nothing. Their first legislator has put into their heads that they are all brethren."—LUCIAN.

plea that we are no longer bound by these laws, because this community or fellowship has ceased to exist among us. Such a plea would only redound to our shame. It is true that our goods are no longer held in common; but have we, because that is so, ceased to be Christians? Nay, for charity will always be compassionate, charity will always consider others rather than herself, charity will always regard her own goods as the property of her neighbour. Yes, and Divine Providence, by making what might seem to be an unequal division and bestowing wealth on certain individuals rather than on others, has in truth only devised a new and wonderful way of making all things in common among Christians, by committing the distribution of these goods to the care of brotherly charity, which always regards the interests of others before its own.

That is the spirit of Christianity. Take heed to the Apostle's words: See that you extinguish it not.

VI

WHIT SUNDAY

THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST AND THE SPIRIT OF THE WORLD

(Synopsis of Sermon)

By Massillon

"Now we have not received the spirit of this world, but the spirit which is of God" (1 Cor. ii. 12).

The spirit of God and the spirit of the world (says St. Augustine) form here below two cities, Babylon and Jerusalem, which have each its laws, its maxims, its citizens; and which, rising from the earth from the beginning of time, have always separated invisibly, though visibly to the eyes of God, the children of heaven from the children of the world.

These two spirits divide all the world, its towns, its villages, its families; and are spread among all conditions, the high and the low; in all places, the public and the retired, the court and the cloisters. Whoever you may be, you who hear me, you belong to one or other of these two spirits, you are a citizen of one of these two cities; that is to say, you belong either to Babylon or Jerusalem; you are animated either by the spirit of Jesus Christ or the spirit of the

world. Christ says that it is impossible to belong to both at the same time; it is still more impossible to belong to neither of them: and as one must necessarily reign in our hearts, those hearts must consequently belong to one master; they must love the world, or Jesus Christ.

It is of the highest importance that we should ask ourselves, to which do we belong? on which side is our heart? what is the predominating spirit that appears in our actions, our desires, our thoughts? in a word, do we live after the spirit of the world or according to the spirit of Jesus Christ?

We have, then, to examine what is the spirit of Jesus Christ, and what the spirit of the world; to note the different characteristics attributed to these two spirits in the Sacred Scriptures, and to decide to which of the two we belong, and whether we can assert, with the same confidence as the Apostle, that *now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God.*

Detachment and Prayer.

The first characteristic of the spirit of Christ is that it is a spirit of detachment, of recollection, and of prayer. No sooner had the Apostles been filled with it than they at once renounced all those external things which hitherto had been the object of their keenest interest and unceasing care, in order to give themselves up wholly and solely to prayer and to the sacred ministry of the Gospel. So was it with men who up to that moment had been so earthly-minded, and carried away by the merest trifles, and so ignorant that they had not even known how to

pray. This is the first great change wrought by the Spirit of God in a soul. When once she has been filled and quickened into new energy by that Divine Spirit, she ceases to take pleasure in those external objects which surround her, and what she loves most is to retire into herself, into that self in which she now finds her God, and from which she only emerges sadly and reluctantly, since even in the midst of the world's tumult and clamour she can, in that secret solitary cell which she has built for herself in her own heart, hold ceaseless converse with her Lord. This is why the Apostle calls the Christian *the spiritual and inward man*, and the worldly-minded and sinful *the outward man*, in order to teach us that as soon as a soul has received the Spirit of God, and is truly animated by that Spirit, her whole life becomes almost a hidden and internal one, her commonest actions are sanctified by the secret faith which purifies them; the Holy Ghost regulates her desires, reforms her judgments, renews her affections, spiritualizes her views. All that she now sees, she sees only with the eye of faith; the whole world is to her nothing but a vast open book in whose pages she reads a never-ending record of the marvellous works of God and the amazing and dense blindness of almost all His creatures.

Not that the objects of sense may not still have power sometimes to surprise and seduce her; but these are now but surprises and momentary absences from her safe retreat. Warned at the very instant of her crossing the threshold of her sanctuary by the secret reproaches of the Spirit of God, Who dwells within her, she at once draws back into herself, into that safe retirement from which the world had as it

were dragged her. Behold here that spirit of faith, of recollection, and of prayer, which testifies to us that we have indeed received the Spirit of God. The just too, according to Scripture, are those who live by faith; who, being strangers and pilgrims upon earth, citizens of a city not here below but built for their lasting habitation in the world to come, have all their hopes, their joys, their interests vested in that their true country, towards which they are ever journeying, counting as nothing and less than nothing all that befalls them, all that they encounter on their way thither.

It is for us now to judge ourselves by this rule, this standard which is held up before us. Do we find in ourselves this first characteristic of the spirit of God? Let us examine ourselves closely and see what it is that governs and dominates us in our judgments, our desires, our affections, our views, our projects, our hopes, our joys and our sorrows. Alas! our life is a wholly external one, which is spent entirely outside our heart and consequently far from God. It is the spirit of the world which forms our desires, rules our affections, regulates our judgments, originates our views, animates our whole conduct. If indeed from time to time some Christian sentiments seem to animate us; if occasionally we incline to the holding of such views as Faith holds, these are mere flashes of that faith, momentary intervals of grace which only for the briefest space of time interrupt the course of our worldly impulses and earth-bound existence. That which governs our conduct, that which makes up the sum and substance of our life, that which is the principle of all our feelings and actions, is the spirit of the world. Now the Spirit of God cannot

reign where the spirit of the world reigns; we therefore still belong to the world and to its spirit, and beneath a religious and decent exterior our hearts remain earth-bound and sensual.

Penitence.

The second characteristic of the spirit of God is self-denial and penance; and this characteristic is a necessary result of that interior life of which we have been speaking. For no sooner has the Spirit of God recalled us to ourselves than He reveals to us the fact that our heart, our mind, our imagination, our senses, our body, in a word, all that goes to make up our being, is out of gear and in revolt against order, truth, and justice. Now it is impossible but that the Divine Spirit, while revealing to us such a state of total disorganization, should at the same time awaken in our hearts two fervent desires and resolutions: the one, to re-establish the order which sin has disturbed within us; the other, to avenge the justice of God which this disorder has outraged.

First, then, the order which sin has disturbed within us must be re-established. For the light which the Spirit of God pours into the heart, filling it with so divine a radiance, does not shine there with no purpose or results; we are warmed as well as illuminated by its beams, and kindled into love for the truths which it reveals to us. Thus a soul which has been renewed by the Spirit of God hates in herself all that she there discovers to be in opposition to truth and justice, and is fired by a holy zeal to bring back her wandering affections and inclinations into rule and order. We can therefore easily judge

whether we have received the Spirit of God, or are still living under the influence of the spirit of the world; for whereas in the former case the soul strives, with the most fervent endeavour and by continually doing violence to herself and to her inclinations, to re-establish in her heart that order which unruly passions had disturbed, never forgiving in herself a single infidelity or weakness, the soul, on the other hand, which is under the dominion of the spirit of the world is slothful, self-indulgent, ready to yield to all the dictates of her ill-regulated tendencies and desires, eager to satisfy them, skilful in justifying them, full of that self-love which is their ruling principle, only checking and restraining them when they lead her to the brink of actual crime. If then we do no violence to our inclinations and earthly desires; if we are not, at some cost to ourselves, fighting against ourselves and striving to conquer ourselves; if we suffer nothing in order to belong to God; if the regularity of our life is after all perhaps simply the result of temperament, or is exacted from us by the demands of advancing years and of conformity to the fashions, customs, and proprieties of the world in which we live, then we still belong to that world, and the Spirit of God is not in us.

The second desire which the Spirit of God creates in an awakened and renewed soul is to avenge the justice of God outraged by the disorder and rebellion of her passions. This Divine Spirit at once enlists the soul in the ranks of those who contend against themselves for the justice of the Eternal God, penetrating her with a fear of His judgments, animating her with holy zeal against that flesh which has served iniquity. It is easy, then, for us to discover whether

or not we have received the Spirit of God; we have only to withdraw into the quiet recesses of our own hearts, and there ask ourselves this simple question: Do we feel that fervour of penitential zeal which neither tears nor sighs nor chastisement of the body can ever satisfy, because we are too keenly conscious that we can never of ourselves satisfy the justice of God? Alas! no; our one desire, our one care, is to gratify and pamper that miserable flesh, on which Divine Justice now looks with only anger and indignation. Far from ranging ourselves on God's side and making the interests of His Divine Justice ours, we are continually pleading for ourselves against that justice. It is then a spirit of flesh and blood which has taken possession of us, and the Spirit of God does not dwell within us.

Fortitude.

The third and last characteristic of the Spirit of God is strength and courage. As it has conquered the world and is stronger than the world, it does not fear the world. Thus, as soon as the Spirit of God had descended upon the Apostles, these men, formerly so weak and timid that they dared not own themselves the disciples of Jesus, began boldly and with holy pride to proclaim Him before priests and doctors of the Law. They dispersed themselves all over the world, and the fact that the whole world rose up in a body and waged war against them only increased their steadfastness and courage. So it is always with a soul that is filled with the Spirit of God; His indwelling presence lifts her above herself, imprints upon her His own character of liberty and

independence, and makes her regard the greatness and power of earth as a mere trifle unworthy even of her attention. Thus nothing can approach the sublimity, the steadfastness, the nobility of a soul possessed by the Spirit of God. As she has lost her hold upon the world, she no longer fears it; its harsh judgment and contemptuous derision are a matter of indifference to her; she only yields deference to truth; there is in her none of that timid, half-complying, half-compromising complaisance which is so detrimental to piety. The spirit of the world, on the contrary, is elastic, supple, pliant under the rule of self-love which is its guiding principle. It does not seek truth, except in as far as truth is likely to be pleasing and acceptable to it; it does not pride itself upon its virtue except in those places and on those occasions which virtue may choose to do honour to it and so gratify its pride. If, then, the spirit that rules and governs us is a spirit of timidity and vacillation; if we are afraid to belong to God; if on all those occasions when there is question of declaring ourselves to be on His side, we blink the question, shift our ground, hesitate, and parley even with the enemy; if when we have to decide between displeasing the world or failing in our duty, we are ready to pronounce the defection and transgression quite legitimate; if when God demands of us some particular line of conduct, the first enquiry which we make is, whether the world will put its veto on such a step being taken, or will graciously give its approval; if we still pose as worldly, that we may not lose the world's esteem; if we speak its language, if we applaud its maxims, if we accommodate ourselves to its manners and customs; if, I say, we do all this,

then it is in vain that we flatter ourselves with the idea that we have stored away somewhere in the recesses of our hearts a poor little fragment of love for the truth; it is in vain that we make a show of regret in giving ourselves up wholly to the world: let us undeceive ourselves; it is not the spirit of God, it is the spirit of the world, which dominates us, guides us, possesses us wholly and entirely.

Great God! shed upon our hearts this day that three-fold spirit of detachment, of self-denial, and of courage, which, shed of old upon Thy disciples, made them new men, conquerors of the world, and witnesses of the truth; annihilate in us this spirit of the world, this spirit of dissipation, of self-indulgence, of compliancy and timidity, which has so long shut the gates of our hearts against Thy Divine Spirit; renew to-day our desires, our affections, and our thoughts. Come, O Thou Spirit of Truth, come into our hearts, occupy the place of the miserable world which displeases us and which we have not the courage to venture to displease; and after having established Thy dwelling in us here below, grant that we may become everlasting temples of Thy glory and truth.

VII

THE DIVINITY OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION

By Bossuet

" The blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead rise again, the poor have the Gospel preached to them, and blessed is he that shall not be scandalized in Me " (Matt. xi. 5-6).

It is no longer by giving sight to the blind, by making the lame walk, by cleansing the leper, or by raising the dead, that Jesus Christ sets the seal of authority upon His mission, and makes known to men His Divinity. These things were done by Him during the days of His mortal life, and He continued to work them in His holy Church as long as they were necessary for the grounding, the settling, and the establishing of the new-born Faith. But these sensible miracles which were worked by the Eternal Son of God upon special individuals and during only a limited space of time, were but the sacred signs and foreshadowings of other and greater miracles, mystic, spiritual, which have no limit either of time or sense, and in their operation are confined to no one individual, to no one period, since they concern alike all men and all ages.

In truth, it is not only the blind, the lame, the

leprous, who, taken as individuals, demand of the Son of God the healing touch, the all-powerful succour of His beneficent hand. Rather is it the whole human race which, taken in its entirety, has neither eyes to see nor ears to hear the things that belong to its peace; it has lost the knowledge of God and can no longer catch the faintest whisper of the Divine voice. The human race is the cripple, lame and stumbling, who, having no guiding and sustaining rule of life and conduct, cannot walk straight or firmly, but is continually losing his footing and falling down by the way. Yes; and moreover, the human race is at once the leper and the dead, who, having none to extricate him from the mire of sin, can neither purify himself from his stains nor escape corruption. Jesus Christ restored to this deaf man his hearing, to this blind man his sight; He did so when He founded the Faith. Jesus Christ made this halting, stumbling cripple walk, when He gave to man as a staff and prop the guiding rule of precept and commandment. Jesus Christ cleansed this leper and raised to life this dead man, when He established in His holy Church the remission of sins. These are the three great miracles by which Jesus Christ manifests to us His Divinity.

Whoever makes known to men sovereign and all-powerful truth, infallible justice, boundless mercy, manifests at the same time Divinity. Now the Eternal Son of God manifests to us in His own Person sovereign truth by the establishment of the Faith, infallible justice by His rule of life and conduct, measureless mercy by the remission of sins; He therefore reveals to us His Divinity. But if we would complete the explanation of our text, we are com-

pelled to add that all this which proves the Divinity of Jesus Christ proves at one and the same time our ingratitude. *Blessed is he that shall not be scandalized in Me.* All His miracles are a scandal to us; all His graces become to us a stumbling block. It was His will that all the truths of our holy Faith should be lofty, sublime; that the way marked out for us by His commandments should be plain and direct, straight as the flight of an arrow, neither turning to the right nor to the left; that in the remission of sins the appointed means of remission should be simple and easy. All this was done for our benefit: this majestic loftiness, to elevate our souls; this directness of the road, to lead us straight to Heaven; this facility in the ordering of the remission of sins, to invite us to penance. But we are so depraved that these things become an offence, a scandal to us. The sublimity of the truths of the Faith only makes us rise up in rebellion against the authority of Jesus Christ; the sharply defined and unwavering directness of the rule of conduct which He gives us in His commandments and precepts, leads us to complain of its rigour; and the facility of obtaining His pardon only disposes us more and more to abuse His Divine patience.

Christian Truth.

Truth is a Queen, dwelling in herself and in the radiance of her own pure light; and she is therefore herself her own throne, her own majesty, her own supreme felicity. Yet, in spite of this, she has, for the good of men, consented, nay, even desired, to reign over them; and Jesus Christ came into the world to establish this empire by the Faith which

He preached to us. And, if we want to be convinced by the evidence of our own senses that the truth of this Faith was and is established indeed as a queen upon her throne, and as a queen invested with all-powerful dignity and authority, here is one assured sign and proof. Without ever considering herself compelled to allege any reason for her actions, and without ever being reduced to borrowing outside assistance or support; by her own authority, by her own strength, she has done what she would, and has reigned in the world.*

Christian Truth, as I have said, has never sought any support from human reasoning, but, being assured in herself of her supreme authority and of her celestial origin, she has spoken, and required to be believed; she has pronounced her oracles, and exacted submission.

She has preached a Trinity, that greatest of all mysteries, inaccessible in its sublimity; she has proclaimed the marvel of a God-Man, a God annihilated on the Cross, that fathomless abyss of degradation. How has she proved what she has thus preached and proclaimed? what reason has she given to justify these astounding, these overwhelming declarations? None, except that reason itself must yield to her since it was born her subject. This is her language; listen to what she tells us: *The Lord hath said it;* and again: *So it is, because I have spoken the word, saith the Lord* (Jer. xxxiv. 5). What indeed could human reason oppose to that? Almighty God has at His disposal means whereby He can make Himself

* "As with Socrates, argument is everything and personal authority nothing, so with Christ personal authority is all in all and argument altogether unemployed."—Sir J. R. Seeley.

heard by man, He has also the right to make Himself believed. He can, at His pleasure, by the wonderful illuminating power of His infinite and uncreated light show us the truth, open as the day, revealed in all its transparent clearness: He can also, by His supreme authority, compel us to submit ourselves absolutely to its teaching, even without giving us any understanding, any comprehension of such teaching. And it is worthy of the greatness, the dignity, the majesty of this Eternal Being to reign over all hearts, whether by leading them captive by the Faith or by satisfying them with a clear vision.

Jesus Christ made use of this royal prerogative in the establishment of His Gospel; and as its holy doctrines are founded on no human reasoning, so too, that it might never degenerate from its original perfection, it has always disdained the support of human eloquence. It is indeed true that the holy Apostles, who were its first preachers, brought the pride and haughtiness of the Roman lictors prostrate to the feet of Jesus, and made the judges before whom they were summoned tremble in their tribunals. Paul treats before Felix of justice, of chastity, of the judgment to come. Felix, an unbeliever, trembles; *we* listen unmoved when the preacher speaks to us of these things. Felix, agitated and alarmed, desires the prisoner to leave him: *It is enough, go thy way; when I have a convenient time, I will send for thee* (Acts xxiv. 25). It is no longer the accused who asks of his judge a respite, it is the astonished judge who demands it of his criminal. Thus it was that the holy Apostles overthrew idols and converted the people. "And," says St. Augustine, "when they had firmly established their life-giving doctrine they left to their

successors the earth illuminated by a light which shone down upon it from Heaven." But all this was not done by the power of eloquence, by the tricks of oratory, by studied rhetoric. It was done by a hidden virtue, an unseen force, persuading or rather captivating the mind and understanding; by a virtue and power which, coming direct from Heaven, clothes itself in the simplicity of familiar and modest diction, in the language of the people, without thereby losing one atom of its dignity, of its intrinsic value, of *itself;* like a rapid river which, coming down from the mountains where all its force and impetuosity had their source, flows with unabated vigour and velocity through the undulating, wide-spreading plains.

We may, then, rest assured that our Lord, when He framed and established His holy Gospel, chose for its formation material not only superexcellent and worthy of its Divine originator, but also the most suited to the demands and necessities of our nature. In our erring, groping, perplexed searchings after truth, we want not a philosopher who argues but a God Who settles the question. The method of reasoning is too slow and too uncertain; what we have to seek is too remote, what we have to prove is too indecisive. And yet it is a question of the very first principle, of the whole foundation and groundwork of our life and morals, which must be resolved upon before another step can be taken. We must, then, of necessity believe what some one has to say to us in the matter. The Christian has nothing to seek for, because he finds everything in the Faith. The Christian has nothing to prove, because the Faith decides everything for him, and because Jesus Christ

has put before him all essential truths in such a form and in such a manner that even if he is incapable of understanding them, he is none the less prepared to believe them.

Thus, by one and the same means, God has been honoured, because, being known by us to be just, He has been believed on the bare utterance of His word; and man has been instructed by a very short method, because, without any circuitous course of reasoning, the authority of the Faith led him at once straight and direct to certainty.

Ah! we can surely never grow weary of dwelling with wondering admiration on this theme, on the glorious supremacy of Christian Truth. She came upon earth as a stranger and a foreigner, and for the space of four hundred years met with nothing but hatred and persecution at the hands of men who were blinded by their own prejudices and deaf to the voice of God. And yet, though the whole world rose up in arms against her, she never begged for human aid and protection. She made for herself valiant and dauntless defenders, worthy of her own greatness, who in their passionate devotion to her interests, knowing no better way of furthering them than by confessing her and dying for her, hastened to their death with such eager impatience as to amaze their persecutors, and, in the end, by their quiet submission to the laws which had condemned them, even brought about the revocation of those laws, which were put to shame by the dignity of the sufferers.

In the counsels of Almighty God and in His designs for the Truth, it was decreed that the kings of the earth should have no share in the establishment of that Truth, nay, that she should be in fact estab-

lished in spite of them; but that in course of time they should be first her disciples and later on her defenders. When He laid the foundations of His holy Church He did not call the princes and the rulers of this world into it. But as soon as those foundations were firmly laid and immutably established, as soon as the stately edifice had risen in all its fair proportions to the zenith of its glory, it pleased the Divine Architect to summon them. *Now, O ye kings, come* (Ps. ii. 10). He called them, then, not from necessity, but by grace. The establishment of the Truth therefore did not in any way depend upon their assistance, nor was the Empire of the Truth raised to its glorious dignity by the power of the sceptre: and if Jesus Christ had appointed kings to be the defenders of His Gospel, He has done it to confer an honour, not as a matter of necessity; to show that He honours their authority and will uphold their power. And still, too, His holy Truth continues always to support herself and to preserve her own independence. Thus, when princes defend the Faith, it is, in fact, rather the Faith which defends them; when they protect religion, it is rather religion which protects them and is the support of their throne. It is therefore very evident that the Truth makes use of men but does not depend upon them, as may be most clearly seen throughout the whole course of her history. When I say *her* history, I speak of the history of the Church, for that of the reign of Truth and of the Church are one and the same. The world has threatened, Truth has remained unflinching, firm; the world has brought all its machinery of subterfuge and trickery and subtle flattery to bear upon the Truth, she has never swerved from her straight direct

course. Heretics have wrangled, the Truth has remained unsullied, pure. Schisms have rent the body of the Church, the Truth has remained whole and entire. Many have been seduced, the weak have been troubled, even the strong have been shaken in their allegiance; an Osius, an Origen, a Tertullian, and, alas! no small number of those who had seemed to be the support of the Church, have fallen away, to the great scandal of their fellow Christians: yet the Truth has always remained, steadfast, immutable. Can there, then, be anything more imperious, more majestic, more self-reliant than Truth? Does she not stand unmoved, unchanging, in spite of all that the malice of her enemies can bring to bear upon her; in spite of their threats and their caresses, of their deceitful gifts and their murderous proscriptions; in spite of schisms and heresies, of all temptations and scandals, and, more than all, in spite of the defection of her faithless children and the terrible downfall of even those who had seemed to be her pillars of strength?

Considering all this, we may well ask if there is a single living soul who ought not to yield submission to an authority so immovably, so gloriously established. And truly it is a marvellous thing in this nation, perhaps the most Christian in the world, to meet with men who dare to set themselves in open opposition to the Gospel. Will it be always so? I ask myself in sad amazement. Must I day after day and year after year be brought into contact with the profane, the licentious, slaves to their own despicable passions and yet presuming to criticise and censure the counsels of the Eternal God? Men who, although they live steeped in materialism, yet venture to decide

upon questions of the most exalted nature and the most vital importance! Men who, in the words of St. Jude, *blaspheme whatever things they know not; and what things soever they naturally know, like dumb beasts, in these they are corrupted* (Jude i. 10). Men twice dead, says the same Apostle; dead, because they have lost charity, and dead, because they have plucked up by the roots the tree of Faith which had been planted in their souls. O God! must I for ever come in contact with such as these? must I see them triumphing in their wickedness, and poisoning the minds of others by their profanity and their light jesting treatment of sacred things?

Let me appeal to you, who are indeed learned and well instructed on many subjects, and who are eager and vehement in your discussions of religious questions. If you must deal with what is so far above and beyond the grasp of your vaunted but finite intellect, I ask you at least to bring to the consideration of such matters the seriousness and the respect which their importance demands. Do not dare to question the decrees of the Eternal God or to pry into the secrets of His mysterious dealings in either the works of nature or of grace with flippant raillery, half-veiled contempt, even disdainful ridicule. Do not imagine yourselves to be the only really reliable authorities in the world, thoroughly well-informed, clear-sighted, profound thinkers. Well, if it is so, and since you desire (it seems) to penetrate into the hidden things of God, show us what you can do; come forward boldly. Begin by solving for us the enigmas of nature; choose whichever of them you please: those that are remote or those that lie close at hand, those that are at your feet or those that are

far above your head. What! something arrests you! in whatever direction you turn your reason becomes twisted and contorted, or goes astray, or succumbs utterly! And yet you will not suffer the Faith to prescribe for you what you ought to believe! Blind, disappointed, yet still disdainful, you refuse to be guided, you will not accept a helping hand! Poor traveller, you have lost your way, and in your folly and presumption you still think that you know the road and need no guide. What would you have us do? must we leave you to yourself? But there are so many turnings and windings, some that will lead you to the very brink of a precipice down which in the gathering darkness you may easily fall. Do you really desire to have all the Divine truths of the holy Faith made clear to your understanding? But think for a moment where you are; remember that those side-paths which you chose to take, all led downwards and away from the Light, into a dark and shadowy region where no ray of sun or moon can penetrate. Your reason has no power to pierce this gloom; its weakness, its folly, its incapacity, now stare you in the face. Then, while you are waiting until the Eternal God in His own good time condescends to show you what He is, why will you not permit the Faith to come to your succour and to teach you at least what you ought to believe about Him?

But enough; this vice of irreverent curiosity regarding the mysteries of religion is neither the most common nor perhaps the most reprehensible to be met with nowadays in what is called the educated class. Instead of being too eager to understand all mysteries, too presumptuous in trying to apprehend

them by the light of reason, there are, alas! many who are absolutely indifferent about the things unseen in the midst of which they live, who care not whether there are mysteries or not; who do not know what they believe or disbelieve, ready to grant anything you will, so long as you let them please themselves and lead the life they like. By such men the freethinker will be discredited, not for an abhorrence of his mode of thought, but because they regard everything with indifference, except pleasures and business. Let us see if I can influence such men as these by representing to them the incorruptible beauty of Christian morality.

Christian Morality.

Thanks to the Divine Mercy, those who in their presumption are continually disputing as to the truth of the Faith never refuse the palm to Christianity as regards its code of morality, and are agreed as to the purity and perfection of our morals. Indeed those two things are inseparable. Two suns are no more needed by religion than by nature; and whoever is sent to us by God to enlighten us as to our morality, will at the same time give us the certain knowledge of those Divine things that are the necessary foundation of a good life. We may justly say that the Son of God gives us even a stronger proof of His Divinity by guiding and directing the daily lives of men into the right way than by giving strength to the palsied and making the lame to walk. Assuredly He must be more than man, Who in the midst of so much error in a world swayed by a thousand contradicting passions and strange disordered imagina-

tions, could thus unravel the tangled skein of good and evil, and lay down an exact rule of life and morals. To reform the human race in this manner is to endow man with the higher life; it is a second creation, nobler in a measure than the first. Whoever had conceived and brought about this reformation, so vital in its importance to the whole human race, must have had, to aid and direct Him, the very same wisdom which in the beginning formed man from the dust of the earth. In fine, this new creation is a work so stupendous that if God Himself had not effected it He must have envied its author.*

Philosophy had indeed made vain attempts to improve the existing state of things, and I do not for a moment deny that from the wreck of all that had been noble and beautiful in the human intellect she rescued some fragments worthy of admiration, and laid down some rules excellent to a certain extent for the improvement of morals and manners; but were I to try to enumerate all her mistakes, shortcomings, errors of judgment, and all the proofs of her general inefficiency, time would fail me.† Let us then render individual homage to that infallible equity which

* "Christ is the highest ideal ever presented to man, and the Christian religion holds within it the purest individual morals and the most comprehensive social truth ever seen or ever known in the world."—PAUL BOURGET.

"If the life and death of Socrates were those of a sage, the life and death of Christ are those of a God."—ROUSSEAU, *Emile*.

† "The points of resemblance between the Gospel teaching concerning renunciation and the Stoic doctrines are so striking and so marked that impious men have dared to regard the latter as the original, and the former as the copy. This harmony proceeds from the very foundation of our reason, and occurs not only in the doctrines of the deepest thinkers among the ancients, but also in those of the most powerful modern philosophers, even when they are avowed enemies of our Faith. Philosophy is certainly one of

rules and guides us in the Gospel; and that we may do so with an understanding mind, as well as with an adoring heart, let us try to form some idea of what Christian Morality really is.

It begins at the very fountain-head, operating upon man in the first moments of his existence. Having united us to God by the indissoluble bond of the purest and tenderest love, it claims for Him and gives to Him the whole man, root and branches and fruits, that is to say, nature, faculties, and operations. For, knowing that the Name of God is the name of a Father, it indeed demands from us love; but, in consideration of our weakness, it prepares us to bestow that love by first inspiring us with holy fear. Being firmly resolved to bind us to God by every possible tie, it teaches us that we must at all times and under all circumstances revere His authority, believe His word, depend on His power, confide in His goodness, fear His judgments, rely upon His wisdom, hope for His promised eternity of happiness.

the sources of truth, but this source is inadequate, vague, often disturbed and intermittent. Judaism, on the other hand, is something supernatural, proceeding directly from God, and its resemblances with the Gospel are far more numerous and striking; in fact, there is identity—the only difference is in the degree of light that they respectively diffuse."—MGR. H. BOLO, *The Beatitudes.*

"The morality and the philosophy of Paganism, as contrasted with the splendour of revealed truth and the holiness of Christian life, are but as moonlight is to sunlight."—DEAN F. W. FARRAR, *Seekers after God.*

"The paramount virtue of religion is, that it has *lighted up* morality; that it has supplied the emotion and inspiration needful for carrying the sage along the narrow way perfectly, for carrying the ordinary man along it at all. Even the religions with most dross in them have had something of this virtue; but the Christian religion manifests it with unexampled splendour."—MATTHEW ARNOLD.

In order that we should render to Him that reasonable homage and adoration which are His due, Christian Morality teaches us that we are ourselves His victims; this is why it obliges us to tame our rebellious passions and to mortify our senses, which in so insidious a manner lead our reason astray. To effect this it takes extraordinary precautions. It is careful to extinguish the tiniest spark, however deep down in our hearts, which might in time kindle a great fire. It stifles anger lest it should develop into implacable hatred. It does not wait to take away the dagger from the child till the little one has done itself a mortal injury, but snatches it from him at the first scratch. It even restrains the eyes, as an avenue to the heart which must be so jealously guarded. Nothing indeed is forgotten which can subject the body to the soul, and the whole soul to God; and that is our sacrifice.

We have to consider under whom, and with whom, we live. We live under the dominion of God; we live in the society of men. Second then to the primary obligation of loving God, our Sovereign Lord and Master, more than ourselves, comes the duty of loving as ourselves our neighbour in whose society we live. There we see brotherly love established under the protection of Almighty God, holy, inviolable, a thing so consecrated by Him that selfishness and unkindness can have no part in it; there, almsgiving, that treasury of graces; there, that forgiveness of injuries which secures for ourselves the forgiveness of God; there, the mercy which is better than sacrifice, and that reconciliation with our offended brother which is the necessary preparation for our approach to the Altar. There, in that society in which all men

are brothers, each one loving the other as himself, we learn to whom we owe respect, to whom obedience, to whom service, to whom protection, to whom help, to whom condescension, to whom kindly warnings and advice; and we see and acknowledge that we are bound to do justice to all, and to injure no one any more than we would injure ourselves.

Let us pass on now to what Jesus Christ instituted for the ordering of family life. He did not content Himself with leaving marriage in its original state as regards honour and dignity; He raised it to a far higher plane, making it a sacrament and a mystical type of His own pure and indissoluble union with His Church. In this way He consecrated the origin of our existence. He abolished polygamy which at one time He had permitted as a means of increasing the human race, and divorce which He had permitted because of the hardness of men's hearts. He no longer allowed human love to wander at large, spending itself on many objects; He re-established it in its original state, making this love reign as a king over two hearts bound firmly to each other, so that, in consequence of such a union and the dominion of such a ruler, the most perfect, undisturbed concord should exist among the members of every Christian family. After having thus restored things to their original condition, it became from henceforth His Divine will that this holiest of all human alliances should be at the same time the most enduring and the firmest, and that the marriage tie should be indissoluble, not only through the strength and sacredness of the promises exchanged by husband and wife, but also because of the natural obligation imposed upon them to bring up wisely and well the children

born of that union.* Thus our Divine Lord gave to the marriage of the faithful a sacred and reverend dignity, making it do honour to nature, strengthen human weakness, safeguard temperance, and bridle sensuality.

What shall I say of those holy laws which make children submissive and parents kind; powerful incentives to virtue, and compassionate in their condemnation of vice; laws which repress licence without discouraging the offender? What shall I say of those admirable precepts which make masters just and servants well-disposed, God Himself in His fatherly kindness having pledged Himself to keep a strict account of all their faithful services? *Masters, remember that you have a Master in Heaven; servants, do service as to God, for your reward is certain* (Col. iii. 24). Who has more firmly secured the authority of princes, of magistrates, and of all lawful superiors than Jesus Christ? He makes the obedience that is due to them a religious duty. He has Himself set up in the consciences of men a throne for their earthly sovereigns and rulers, whose authority He takes under His own protection, making their persons sacred. That is why Tertullian, addressing the mini-

* "The family is now, more than ever, the first element and the last rampart of society. Whilst, in general society, everything becomes more and more mobile, personal, and transient, it is in domestic life that the demand for permanency, and the feeling of the necessity of sacrificing the present to the future, are indestructible. It is in domestic life that the ideas and the virtues which form a counterpoise to the excessive and ungoverned movement excited in the great centres of civilisation are formed. It is in the bosom of domestic life, and under its influences, that private, the basis of public, morality is most securely maintained.

"The assistance of another and a higher spirit is also needed. It is peculiar to religion that she penetrates more deeply than the domestic or the political spirit can do into the human soul."—GUIZOT, *Democracy in France.*

sters of an Emperor, and owning that the duties of their office expose them to a great deal of envy and hatred, adds: "But now you have fewer enemies to contend with, on account of the immense increase in the number of Christians." At the same time He reminds princes that the sword is given to them only to be drawn against rebels and enemies, that their authority and power must only be exercised in chastising evil-doers and in lightening the burden of the oppressed.

Well, I have shown you a picture, in miniature but drawn from life and faithful, of the immortal beauty of Christian Morality. It is, I confess, a severe style of beauty; but no wonder, because it is absolutely pure. It is regular; it must be so, because it is religious. But could any ethics be more holy? could any economy be more admirable, any polity more just? Only an enemy to the human race, careless about its welfare or absolutely hostile to its interests, could possibly set himself in opposition to such beneficent laws.* Only men who, in the words of Salvian, "would rather declaim against moral precepts than make war against vice"; only such men, I say, could repudiate and despise Christian Morality.

* "The Christian religion, of all religions that ever existed, is the most humane, the most favourable to liberty and to the arts and sciences. Nothing is more divine than its morality; nothing more lovely and sublime than its tenets, its doctrine, and its worship."—CHATEAUBRIAND, *The Genius of Christianity.*

"Brunetière attempted to show how much the positivism of Auguste Comte was akin to Catholicism. He endeavoured to prove that modern thought contained in itself, without suspecting it, the seed of Catholicism. On one occasion, in the course of a discussion with a Socialist, he went so far as to infer the identity of the social aspirations of Catholicism and the aspirations of the Socialists for a general reform of the world."—*The Catholic Encyclopædia.*

For my own part, I give myself heart and soul to this splendid institution. The morality alone of the Faith would make me accept it. I believe wholly and entirely in the Teacher Who has taught me so well how to live. The Faith proves morality to me; morality proves the Faith to me. The truths of the Faith and the teaching of morality are things so closely connected and so sacredly bound to each other, that it is impossible to separate them. Jesus Christ founded morality upon the Faith; and after His having raised the splendid edifice to such a noble height, shall I dare to tell so wise an Architect that He laid its foundations badly? No; rather, seeing the beauty, the perfection, the fair proportions, the graceful symmetry of what He condescends to show me, shall I not feel assured, and rest entirely happy in the assurance, that the same Infinite Wisdom has planned and disposed all that He conceals from me?

And now, sinful and ignorant men, what have you to say against this Christian Morality? How does it injure you? what portion of it do you want to get rid of? You are beset with difficulties; is it reason that dictates them? Ah! I can read your thoughts only too well; I know the language of your heart. You are asking for liberty. Ah! say no more. I understand you perfectly. The liberty which you crave is in truth slavery, captivity, a miserable bondage of heart and soul. Ah! let that poor heart be set free; let it be restored to that God to Whom it belongs by right, and Who so earnestly, so perseveringly, so authoritatively demands its restoration. Consider for a moment. Is it common justice, is it reasonable or seemly, that the law should be pared

and pruned and twisted in order to favour your passions? Rather, should not everything in your passions that is contrary to the law be cut down, thrown aside, destroyed? If not, the state of things will be such as that of which the Prophet Habacuc is speaking when he says that *the Law is torn to pieces* (Habac. i. 4). There lives not the man so wholly and entirely debased but that sin in some one form or other is distasteful to him. Take for instance an individual who is naturally liberal and free-handed: you may inveigh as loudly as you please against robbery and rapine, he will agree with every word you speak and with all your opinions on the subject. But he is proud, ambitious, vindictive; you must allow him to return evil for evil, to plot, to intrigue, to involve friends and enemies alike in any venture, however dangerous, which may advance his own interests. Thus the whole law will be mutilated, and we shall see (as the great St. Hilary says, speaking on another subject) "as great a variety in doctrine as in morals, and as many sorts of faith as of tastes and inclinations."

Suffer yourselves, then, to be guided by these holy and perfect laws, make them your rule of life and conduct. And do not tell me that it is too perfect a rule; that you can never satisfy its demands, never reach such a pinnacle of excellence as it points out to you in the far distance. Ah! that is always the plea of the slothful and half-hearted. They see a thousand obstacles in their way; everything appears to them impossible; and when there is really nothing to fear, they are beset by imaginary terrors, a prey to innumerable anticipations of evil. *The slothful man saith: There is a lion in the way, and a lioness*

in the road (Prov. xxvi. 13). *The slothful man saith: There is a lion without, I shall be slain in the midst of the streets* (Prov. xxii. 13). Yes, the slothful are always finding difficulties in their path, and they never try to overcome one. Indeed I must ask you who object that the Gospel law is too perfect and beyond the reach of human effort, whether you have tried to practise it. Show me what steps you have taken in that direction, tell me what attempts you have made to succeed. Why do you not at least begin something, before complaining of your weakness and incapacity? The second step, you say, is impossible: certainly it must be so if you have never taken the first. Begin to walk, start on your journey, and then advance by degrees, a step at a time if you please. Things will get easier as you go on, the rough road will grow smoother and more level as it stretches out before you. But you complain before you have attempted anything: you tell us that you are weary of the journey, when you actually have not even stirred from your place; that you are weighed down by the burden of labour, which you positively have not yet begun to take in hand! This is worse than childish and ridiculous; it is absolutely intolerable. Besides, how can we ever dare to say that our Divine Lord has laid upon us a burden beyond our strength, when, in His tender consideration for our weakness, He offers us so much help, grants us so many loopholes of escape from danger, and, not content with holding us back by His precepts on the very brink of the precipice, even after we have fallen down it, stretches forth a hand to lift us out? He remits our sins through the Sacrament of His pardoning love.

Christ's Forgiveness.

And now, almost with fear and trembling, I take up the theme of that same pardoning love, of the infinite tenderness and compassion of our Divine Saviour. I say, with fear and trembling; not (God forbid!) because there is any difficulty in proving its inexhaustible bounty, its unfailing certainty. No; even the most stammering, the least eloquent tongue could find words to speak, however inadequately, on such a subject. For what is there more simple, more easy of attainment, and at the same time more vast, more limitless, than this Divine goodness, which not only receives those who seek it and gives itself wholly and entirely to those who embrace it, but even calls back those who are wandering away from it, and always opens a way of return for those who have actually abandoned it? But men know this well enough; they only know it too much to their detriment. It is not well to proclaim upon the housetops a truth so momentous but so terribly abused by the world at large. No; it must be whispered softly to sinners bowed down under the burden of their offences; to the conscience-stricken, the broken-hearted, the despairing. We must seek out in the busy, jostling crowd of careless, pleasure-seeking, sinful men and women some poor desolate soul and say this in his ear, so that no other hears it: *God forgives infinitely, boundlessly.* But it would be giving the rein to licence, were we to set before the eyes of proud sinners a picture of this goodness which knows no limit, and it would be multiplying crime to preach those Divine mercies which are countless.

And yet, it is not just or right that the hard-

heartedness and ingratitude of men should rob the loving-kindness of the Saviour of those praises which are His due. Let us then raise our voices and proclaim aloud that His mercy is infinite. Man was doomed to die in his sins; Jesus Christ died instead of him. It is written of the sinner, that his blood must be upon his own head; but the Precious Blood of Jesus Christ covers and protects him. Sinners, stained as you are with a thousand crimes, seek no longer to wash them away in the blood of slain beasts. It would indeed be a vain and hopeless attempt, for not all the flocks that range upon the mountains could make a hecatomb powerful enough to expiate one single sin, nor can man's life be redeemed by the sacrifice of brute beasts. But see! upon the Cross Jesus Christ offers Himself, a Man for men, an innocent Man for the guilty, a God-Man for mere mortals. We see, then, in the price paid for our redemption, not only the element of equality, but something far above and beyond that. That which is offered is infinite; and in order that He Who offers it may be of equal dignity, He Who is Himself the Victim has willed also to be the Priest. Therefore, sinners, never lose hope. Jesus Christ died once; but the fruit of His death is everlasting: Jesus Christ died once; but, as the great Apostle St. Paul tells us, *He is always living, to make intercession for us* (Heb. vii. 25).

There is, then, infinite mercy for us in Heaven; but, that it may be applied to us on earth, it is wholly and entirely communicated to the holy Church in the sacrament of Penance. For, listen to the words in which its institution is framed: *Whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth shall be bound also in Heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose upon earth shall be*

loosed also in Heaven (Matt. xvi. 19). Here you see indeed mercy which has no limit. In this respect the sacrament of Penance differs from that of Baptism. Baptism can be received but once; it cannot be repeated. The gates of Penance stand always open. Come ten times, a hundred times, a thousand times: the power of the Church is never exhausted. These words of Jesus Christ have in them an everlasting, an abiding truth: *Whose sins you shall forgive they are forgiven them* (John xx. 23). In this declaration I find no term prescribed, no number fixed, no measure determined. We must then recognise in it infinite mercy. The fountain of holy Baptism is called in the Scriptures (according to one interpretation) *a sealed fountain* (Cant. iv. 22). In it you are washed and cleansed once and for all; then it is shut up, sealed; there is no return to it for you. But we have in the Church another fountain, of which the Prophet Zacharias speaks thus: *In that day there shall be a fountain open to the House of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for the washing of the sinner* (Zach. xiii. 1). This fountain of Penance is not only for all, but it is always open; and open, without distinction or reservation, to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to all the children of the Church. It receives sinners at all hours, in all moments. The leper, the unclean, can come when and how he will, again and again, to cleanse himself in this fountain which the merciful Saviour keeps always open for him.

But here, alas! we see our own faithlessness and ingratitude; here we find indulgence multiplying crime, and the well-spring of infinite mercy becoming the source of profanation and sacrilege. What words of mine could ever be forcible enough to deplore the

acts of sacrilege which poison the waters of Penance? Tertullian, speaking of holy Baptism, exclaims: "O happy Baptismal water, happy and blest, which can never be the sport of sinners!" It is the bath of Penance, always open to sinners, always ready to receive those who return to it; it is this bath of mercy which is exposed to contempt from the very facility of its beneficence, whose waters, contrary to their nature, stain, when they would cleanse, the souls of men, because the ease with which those men can plunge into these pure waters again and again, makes them, without fear, again and again defile their consciences. Who would not grieve over so strange and terrible an abuse of so inestimable a benefit, an abuse growing out of the very generosity of the love which bestows it? What can I do, what steps can I take, to stop the profanation of misguided perverse men who run their vessel upon a rock instead of guiding it into a harbour of safety?

Sinners are very ready to tell us that nothing but repentance is needed to enable them to approach this fountain of graces. It is in vain that we say to those who trust so blindly in future repentance: 'Will you not consider that God has indeed promised pardon to repentance, but that He has never promised to give the time needed for the awakening of that dormant emotion in the soul of the sinner?' Unhappily this reasoning, convincing though you would think it must be, produces no effect, so often has it been repeated. We speak again, although we know that it is to deaf ears. Children of Jesus Christ, who have wandered so far from Him, consider your blindness: you are actually making the mercy of God a means of hardening your hearts more and

more. This is the sin against the Holy Ghost, against the grace of the remission of sins. God has nothing more that He could have done to draw you back from sin. You have put His mercy to its last test. What more could He do than call you, wait for you, stretch forth His arms to you, offer you His forgiveness? But all this only makes you bolder and more venturesome in your wickedness. What then must He do? Since His mercy is exhausted and, as it were, overridden by your malice, is there anything left for Him to do but to abandon you to His vengeance? Well, are you so determined to lose your soul? are you so mad, so senseless, as to risk an eternity of happiness for a few years of pleasure that pales if you hold it ever so firmly and which often even slips from your grasp and leaves nothing but misery behind? I entreat you to get rid of this monstrous idea of sinning as much and as often as you please, that you may afterwards repent. *Be astonished, heaven and earth, at such madness as this* (Jer. ii. 12). Blind, deluded mortals are not afraid of sinning because they hope one day to be sorry for what they have done amiss. What folly! what madness! I have often read in the Sacred Scriptures that Almighty God sends upon sinners a kind of confusion and bewilderment, a sort of spiritual vertigo; but I see it clearly in your case! Rouse yourselves, open the eyes of your mind to the terrible danger which threatens you. This sorrow which you desire to feel one day, this repentance which you hope to experience at some future time, are purely imaginary, mere shadows, shams and unrealities. Do not deceive yourselves; it is no such easy matter to repent. The whole soul must be shaken to its very foundations;

all our evil inclinations must be torn up by the roots; we must wage an implacable war against our most darling vices, our frailties, our miserable inconsistencies; we must, so to speak, wrench away ourselves from ourselves. If you were proposing to yourselves such a repentance as this, that would indeed be to put a wholesome and a powerful restraint upon your sins. But the repentance which you are expecting is nothing but a counterfeit, the sorrow which (you say) you hope to experience is a chimera and an illusion; and you may well fear lest the God thus despised and mocked, the avenger of His profaned sacraments, should, as a just punishment of your strange perversion of the nature of Penance, send you, not the *peccavi* of a David, not the bitter tears of a Peter, not the heart-rending sorrow of a Magdalene, but the self-interested regret of a Saul, the despairing misery of a Judas, the unfruitful repentance of an Antiochus; you may well fear lest you should perish miserably in your false contrition, in your impenitent penitence.

Let us, then, resolve so to live that the remission of sins may never be for us a scandal. Let us put things, things of such vital importance, to their right uses. Let penance be penance, a remedy and not a poison. Let hope be hope, a resource for weakness, not a prop for presumption. Let sorrow be sorrow; let repentance be repentance, that is to say, an atonement for past sins, not a foundation for future ones. So shall we, by the pathway of Penance, reach that blessed place where there is neither repentance nor any more sorrow, but a calm that knows no storm, a peace that has no ending.

VIII

THE DIVINITY OF JESUS CHRIST

By Massillon

God manifests Himself to men for the purpose of teaching them what He is and of instructing them in the duties they owe to Him. Religion is, strictly speaking, a Divine light which reveals God to mankind and regulates the duties of man to God. Whether the Most High, therefore, appears personally upon earth, or whether He invests some extraordinary man with the power of the Holy Spirit, His design or object can only be the sanctifying of His name in the world and the establishing of a worship that ascribes to Him alone that which is due only to Him.

Now, if our Lord Jesus, Who came in the fulness of time, were not God, but merely an innocent and righteous man chosen as an envoy from God to the earth, the principal end of his ministry would have been to lead the world to idolatry, and to rob the Divine Being of His glory in order to ascribe it to himself.

And, in truth, if we consider the glory of Christ's ministry in that display of prophecies that preceded it, in the marvellous circumstances that accompanied it, and in the works that He Himself performed, the glory is such that if Jesus Christ were only a man like ourselves, God Who sent him invested with such

glory and power, must have deceived us and have been guilty of the idolatry of those who adore him.

But the prophecies that announced Jesus Christ, the miracles that He performed, and the marvellous circumstances of His mysterious life are but the externals of His glory and greatness; and to know all that He was we must enter into the interior and spirit of His ministry, we must consider His personal sanctity and doctrine which are included in the spirit of His ministry. Let us unfold the extent of His righteousness and the character of His doctrines and promises, and show that we must either deny Jesus Christ to be a righteous man and one sent of God, or admit that He is Himself God manifest in the flesh and come into the world for the salvation of men.

Yes, this is an inevitable alternative: if Jesus is righteous, He is God; and if His doctrine is not a doctrine of error and deceit, it is that of the Eternal Truth Himself Who has appeared on earth to instruct us.

Now, the enemies of His Divinity are constrained to admit that He was a righteous and a holy man and the friend of God*; and if there have been some

* "Jesus is the man who has made his race take the greatest step towards the divine. In him was condensed all that is good and elevated in our nature. Whatever may be the unexpected phenomena of the future, Jesus will not be surpassed."—ERNEST RENAN.

"About the life and sayings of Jesus there is a stamp of personal originality, combined with profundity of insight, which must place the prophet of Nazareth, even in the estimation of those who have no belief in his inspiration, in the very first rank of men of sublime genius of whom our species can boast."—JOHN STUART MILL.

"Try all the ways to righteousness you can think of, and you will find that no way brings you to it except the way of Jesus, but that this way does bring you to it."—MATTHEW ARNOLD.

"It was reserved for Christianity to present to the world an

profligate or perverted characters who have dared to attack His innocence and to confound Him with seducers, their names are held in abhorrence.

What man, indeed, ever appeared upon earth with more incontestable marks of innocence and sanctity than Jesus Christ the Son of the Living God? In what philosopher was ever discovered such a love of virtue, such a sincere contempt for the world, such charity for mankind, such an indifference to human glory, such interest in the glory of the Supreme Being, such an elevation above all that the world admires and seeks after? How ardent was His zeal for the salvation of men! To this object were referred all His discourses, His cares, His desires, His solicitudes. The pagan philosophers only criticised men; they only sought to expose men's weakness or folly: Jesus Christ spoke of their vices only to prescribe their remedy. The philosophers were the censurers of human weaknesses in others from which they themselves were not exempt: Jesus, with a heart melting with compassion, pointed out faults in others of which He Himself was innocent; He even shed tears over the immoralities of a faithless and

ideal character, which has been not only the highest pattern of virtue, but the strongest incentive to its practice; and has exercised so deep an influence that it may be truly said that the simple record of three short years of active life has done more to regenerate and to soften mankind than all the disquisitions of philosophers and all the exhortations of moralists."—WILLIAM E. H. LECKY.

"Christ is the highest object we can possibly imagine with respect to religion, the being without whose presence in the mind perfect piety is impossible."—DAVID F. STRAUSS.

"Christ's gospel cannot be replaced by anything else. In liberty and serenity of soul he surpassed all the prophets. His personality is and remains the only foundation of all moral culture."—PROFESSOR ADOLF VON HARNACK.

ungrateful city. The philosophers sought not so much to reclaim their fellow-men as to procure esteem by despising them* : Jesus Christ only sought to save mankind, and was as unaffected by the calumnies and persecutions of His enemies as He was indifferent to human applause.

Look into all the particulars of His life and conduct, and say if there ever appeared on earth a man so absolutely exempt from the weaknesses the most inseparable from humanity. The more closely we scrutinize Him, the more apparent is His sanctity. The disciples who were the most intimately acquainted with His conduct were the most struck by the holiness of His life; and familiarity, so dangerous to the most heroic virtue, only served to discover new wonders in His. He everywhere appeared the messenger of the Most High. His most ordinary actions are singularities, through the novelty and sublimity of the dispositions with which He performed them; He appeared no less a Divine character when He ate at the Pharisee's than when He raised Lazarus from the dead. Truly, nature alone could never have so highly exalted human weakness. We have not presented to us here a philosopher who imposes on us, but a righteous Man Who derives from His own conduct the rules and precepts of His doctrine.

Now, I say that if Jesus is holy, He is God; and whether you consider the doctrine which He has taught us with respect to His Father, or with respect to men, it is no more than a collection of malignant ambiguities and concealed blasphemies, if He be no

* "The Philosophers, and especially Seneca, did not remove men's faults by their instructions, but only directed them to contribute the more to the setting up of their own pride."—La Rochefoucauld.

more than a mere man sent from God to instruct mankind.†

What was His doctrine respecting the Father? Moses and the prophets incessantly proclaimed that the Lord was the One Great All; that it was impious to debase Him by comparing Him to any of His creatures; that they were but His servants and messengers, lowly instruments in the hands of Him Who by them wrought such great things. No doubtful expression escaped them respecting this most essential point of their mission; no comparison between themselves and the Supreme Being; no equivocal term which might confound them with the Lord in Whose name they spoke.

But if Jesus Christ were but a messenger like them, He was far from fulfilling His ministry with the same faithfulness. For, what is His language? He proclaimed Himself *equal to the Father* (Matt. xi. 27); He declared that He *was descended from Heaven* (John vi. 51), that He *proceeded from the bosom of God* (John xvi. 28), that *eternal life depended on knowing the Son as well as on knowing the Father* (John xvii. 3), that He *was before Abraham* (John viii. 58), that He *was before all things* (John xvii. 5), that *He and the Father were one* (John x. 40), and that *whatever was done by the Father was done by the Son likewise* (John v. 19). What prophet, except Christ, ever used such extraordinary, such unheard-of

† "The choice really lies between the hypothesis of conscious and culpable insincerity, and the belief that Jesus speaks literal truth and must be taken at His word."—LIDDON, *The Divinity of our Lord.*

It is noteworthy that Massillon had anticipated Lacordaire and Liddon in popularizing this old argument that Christ was "aut Deus aut homo non bonus." Liddon gives no reference to Massillon.

language? Who, except Jesus, ever attributed to his own strength the great wonders which the Lord wrought by His ministry? And Jesus did not content Himself with asserting that He was equal to God, but He insisted on the truth of His own claims, in opposition to the murmurs of the Jews who were scandalized; so far from undeceiving, He confirmed them in their scandal.

Would the pious and gentle Jesus have acted thus if He were not God? Paul and Barnabas rent their garments when they were taken for gods, they proclaimed aloud before the people that they were nothing more than mortal men, and that God alone ought to be adored, of Whom they were only the envoys and ministers (Acts xiv. 14). The angel in the Apocalypse rejects with horror the adoration of St. John, and commanded him *to adore God alone* (Apoc. xix. 10). But Jesus unresistingly permits Divine honours to be paid to Himself; He applauds the faith of His disciples when St. Thomas calls Him *their Lord and their God* (John xx. 28).

And, truly, what blessings has Christ brought to the world if those who adore Him are idolaters and profane? The multitudes who have, all through the centuries, believed in Him, have adored Him as the Eternal Son of God, the express image of His substance and the brightness of His glory. There have been but a small number who, professing Christianity, acknowledged Him but as a messenger of God and refused to adore Him as their God. Do these, then, constitute that numerous people, of every kindred, nation, and tongue, which Jesus came to form upon earth? Is this that Jerusalem, once barren, now become fruitful, which was to enclose in its bosom

kingdoms and nations, and to which the most distant isles, with their princes and kings, were to resort to worship? Was, then, all the future magnificence of the Gospel to be confined to the forming of the odious sect of an impious Socinus?

We have also to consider Christ's doctrine respecting men whom He came to instruct, and to see in it a proof of the truth of His Divinity. But it is not my intention to enlarge on the wisdom, the sanctity, and the sublimity of His doctrine, the whole of which does honour to reason and is worthy of the soundest philosophy; everything therein is suited to the weakness and to the excellence of man, to his wants, and to his high destiny; everything therein inspires a contempt of the things that perish and a love for the things that are eternal; the whole of it is calculated to maintain order and tranquillity in the world*; the whole of it is great and grand because the whole of it is true. I pass over those general reflections, and come to the more precise duties of love and dependence which His doctrine requires men to discharge to Himself. He commands us to love Him as He loved the Father (John xv. 10); to refer all our actions, our thoughts, our desires, even our whole selves to His glory, in the same manner as to the Father (Matt. x.); He even declares that sin is forgiven only to those who love Him much (Luke vii. 47). What prophet, before Jesus Christ, ever came and said to mankind: "You shall love me in the same degree as you love the Father; you shall do everything for my glory"?

* "Even our whole system of legitimate courtesy, politeness and refinement is surely nothing less than one of the minor and often unacknowledged results of the Gospel scheme."—W. E. GLADSTONE.

But that is not all. Jesus not only requires our love; He demands the proofs of the most generous, the most heroic attachment. He desires us to love Him more than we love our neighbours, our friends, our relations, our possessions, our life, more than we love the whole world, more even than we love ourselves (Luke xiv. 26). He declares that the Christian who is not so disposed towards Him is not worthy of Him; that he who places Him on a level with creatures, or even with himself, dishonours and injures Him and shall never partake of His promises.

Who but a God could impose such commands? Life is the gift of the Most High; and who but the Most High can exact the sacrifice of it? Jesus commands us to suffer tortures and death for His name; with the authority of a God He declares that if we renounce Him before men, even to avoid the greatest evil, He will renounce us before His Father (Matt. x. 33). Ah! if He were not the Word made flesh, can it be supposed that so many millions of people could have existed on earth so devoid of every natural feeling, so deaf to the tender calls of self-preservation, as to run with ecstasies of delight into the very jaws of death in support of such a doctrine? Can it be supposed that innumerable multitudes of every age, condition, sex, would have foregone the sweetest pleasures of human nature, would have given themselves to be dragged to torture and martyrdom rather than renounce their belief in the Divinity of Jesus the Son of God? Can it be supposed that the doctrine of Christ's Divinity, had it been erroneous, could have triumphed over the universe, confounded all sects, united all hearts, and been acknowledged by the wisest men to be superior to all the science, all

the wisdom and knowledge of earth? Was the human race deceived? and did the blood of the martyrs, instead of being the seed of the faithful, inundate the whole world with superstitition and idolatry? Were, then, the pagan tyrants and persecutors the vindicators of the justice and glory of the Divinity? O God! can the ear of man hear these blasphemies without horror! And what more can be necessary to confound infidelity than to exhibit it to itself!

But it is not enough to have considered the spirit of the ministry of Jesus Christ in His doctrine and instruction; we must consider it, in the second place, in the benefits and promises which the world has received from Him. He came to deliver all men from eternal death; He came to blot out the handwriting that was against them and to make them the children of God; He was sent to open Heaven to them and to admit them into a partnership of glory with the angels in the bosom of God; He has brought them the knowledge of salvation and the doctrine of truth. Those gifts have not ceased with His abode on earth. Seated at the right hand of His Father, He still sheds them abroad in the hearts of succeeding generations. All our disorders still find their remedy in Him. He feeds us with His Body and Blood in the Eucharist. In the sacraments He washes us from our defilement. He appoints pastors and inspires teachers by whom we are led and taught. He is incessantly present in our hearts, to solace us and to sustain us. Man has no sinful passions which His grace cannot purify, no virtue which is not produced by His influence; He Himself assures us that He is our way, our truth, our life, our righteousness and our redemption. What is this new doctrine which the Scriptures teach us

about the Messiah? Can a mere man be the source of so many and such favours to others? Can a sovereign God, so jealous of His glory, attach us to a creature by such intimate and sacred duties and bonds, so that we should depend on him almost more than on Himself?

Nor did Jesus Christ, Who has purchased for us those benefits only by becoming a sacrifice for us, inform His disciples, in His dying moments, that it was to the Lord alone they owed so many blessings; that He was Himself only the instrument, not the author and source, of all those favours; that therefore they ought to forget Him, and give glory, not to Him, but to God alone. It was with very different instructions that Jesus Christ terminated His miracles and ministry. Not only was He unwilling that His disciples should forget Him and cease to hope in Him after His death; but, when on the point of leaving them, He assured them that He would be present with them always, even to the end of the world; He even promises them still more than what He had already bestowed, and unites them to Him still more strongly by indissoluble and eternal bonds.

He promises that He will send to them the Paraclete the Comforter, Whom He calls the Spirit of His Father and the Spirit of Truth (John xiv.). What authority has Jesus Christ over the Spirit of God, to dispose of Him at His pleasure, if He is not His own Spirit? Nevertheless the promise of Christ has been accomplished: He had scarcely ascended to Heaven before the Spirit of God was poured out upon His disciples; and under the influence of that Spirit the ignorant became wiser than philosophers, the weak became stronger than tyrants, and those that the

world esteems fools became more prudent than the wise men of the world.

Jesus promises to His disciples the power of remitting sins, of opening the gates of Heaven to the just man and of shutting them against the sinner. Who but God can forgive sins? and who but God can give power to weak man to exert such authority?

He promises, besides, to His disciples the gift of miracles; that they should raise the dead in His name; that they should give sight to the blind and health to the sick and speech to the dumb; that they should have unlimited command over nature. And the disciples wrought every wonder which He had enumerated; and they wrought them, not in the name of the Father, but in the name of Jesus Who was crucified.

What more can I say? He promises His disciples that the conversion of the world and the complete triumph of the Cross shall be effected by their preaching; that at His name the knee shall bend of all that are mighty and exalted on earth, of philosophers, of Caesars, of tyrants; and that His Gospel shall be received by the whole universe.† Who but a God holds the hearts of all men in His hands to guarantee such a change in the world? The unbeliever, perhaps, may say that God reveals future things to His prophets. But if Jesus is not God, He certainly is no prophet, His predictions are dreams and chimeras; it is a lying spirit that seduces Him: He predicted that all nations sitting in the shadow of death would open their eyes to the Light, and He perceived not

† "Jesus Christ is the great name in history. There are others for whom men have died; He alone is adored by all people, in all nations, and at all times."—H. Didon, O.P.

that they were about to fall into a more criminal darkness by adoring Himself; He predicted that idols would be overturned, and He perceived not that He Himself would be set up in their place; He foretold that He would form a holy people of every language and tribe, and He perceived not that He came solely to form a new race of idolaters out of all nations, who would place Him in the temple of the living God, who would refer to Him all their actions and homage and worship, who would do everything for His glory, who would reverence and love Him a thousand times more spiritually and intimately and universally than the heathens had adored their idols!

It is to this that incredulity leads! Destroy the foundation, or remove the corner-stone, which is Jesus Christ the Eternal Son of the Living God, and the whole edifice falls to the ground. Cut off from the doctrine of Christianity Jesus Christ the God-Man, and you take away all merit of faith, all the comfort of hope, and every motive to love. Thus, with what zeal did not the first disciples of the Gospel oppose the impious men who attacked the essential Divinity of their Master? Those disciples realized that it was attacking religion at the heart; that it was depriving them of everything that sweetened their persecutions and sufferings, of all confidence in future promises, of all their great and noble expectations; and that if this doctrine of the Divinity of the Redeemer were once subverted, all their religion would become an empty vapour, and would be no more than the creed of a mortal man who, like other founders of sects, had left to his disciples only his name.

The heathen reproached the early Christians with

offering Divine homage to their Christ. The younger Pliny, a celebrated Roman proconsul, after having given an account of their manners and doctrines to the Emperor Trajan, was forced to avow that the Christians were righteous, innocent and equitable; he only reproached them with singing hymns in honour of their Christ and rendering homage to him as a god. The Christians did not vindicate themselves from this charge. If they believed not Jesus to be God, would they have suffered themselves to be accused of offering Divine worship to Him? Ah! if it is an error to believe Jesus Christ to be equal to God, it is an error which was born with the Church, and which has reared the whole edifice of Christianity; it is an error which has formed innumerable martyrs and converted the world.*

But what fruit are we to draw from this discourse? That Jesus Christ is the grand object of Christian piety; that to meditate continually upon Jesus Christ, to have recourse to Him, to nourish ourselves with His doctrine, to enter into the spirit of His mysteries, to study His actions, to rely solely upon the merit of His Blood and of His Sacrifice, is the only true knowledge and the most essential duty of the believer.† Remember, then, that piety towards

* "The conception of Jesus, not only as the Messiah, but as a divine being, is of the very essence of Paul's theology, and immanent in almost every chapter of the Epistles."—C. G. MONTEFIORE, *Liberal Judaism and Hellenism*, p. 90.

† "There is at the bottom of human nature an *imperishable paganism* which wakes up in every century, which is not dead in ours, and which is always ready to fall back into pagan philosophies, into pagan laws and pagan arts, because men find there the realisation of their dreams and the satisfaction of their instincts. Gibbon's thesis is still the thesis of all the sensual schools,

Jesus Christ is the vital spirit of the Christian religion; that nothing is solid but what you shall build on that foundation; and that the principal homage that He expects from you is that you become like unto Him and that His life become the model of your own, in order that through your resemblance to Him you may be included in the number of those that shall be partakers of His glory.

who accuse Christianity of stifling the legitimate development of human nature by denying the flesh, by adjourning to a future state the happiness that ought to be found here below, by destroying that enchanted world where Greece had deified strength, riches, and pleasure, and supplanting it by a sorrowful world where humility, poverty and chastity keep guard at the foot of the Cross."—F. OZANAM.

IX

THE BLESSED TRINITY *

By Bossuet

"Holy Father, keep them in Thy name, whom Thou hast given Me, that they may be one as We also are one" (John xvii. 11).

When I consider within myself the eternal happiness which God has prepared for us; when I think that we shall then see not dimly but clearly all that we now believe on earth, and that the light which no man can now approach will then be unveiled to us; that the Adorable Trinity will then reveal to us Its secrets; that therein we shall behold the true Son of God coming forth eternally from the bosom of His Father, and yet eternally abiding there; that we shall see the Holy Ghost, that flame of living fire, proceeding from the mutual embrace of the Father and the Son, or rather being Himself the embrace, the love, and the kiss† of the Father and the Son;

* Cf. Newman's sermon on *The Mystery of the Holy Trinity*, in his Parochial Sermons, vol. vi. Some extracts from Bossuet's *Elévations sur le Mystère de la Trinité* are to be found at the end of the present volume.

Lacordaire also, in his Conference on *The Inner Life of God* (Eng. trans., London, 1870), expounds the theology of the Trinity. See, too, St. Augustine, *On the Trinity* (Eng. trans. by Rev. A. W. Haddan, Edinburgh, 1873), books ix-x and xiv-xv.

† Cf. St. Bernard, *Sermons on the Canticle of Canticles*, viii.

that we shall contemplate that Unity so inviolable that number can bring no division into it, and that number so well ordered that unity brings no confusion into it; when (I say) I consider all those things, my soul is so filled with rapture that I can only cry out, with the Psalmist: *How lovely are Thy Tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts! my soul longeth and fainteth for the Courts of the Lord* (Ps. lxxxiii. 1). And since our only consolation in this sorrowful pilgrimage is the thought of those eternal joys which await us in the life to come, let us here below meditate upon the wonders which we shall behold in Heaven, and speak (though it may be with stammering tongues) of those hidden and ineffable mysteries which will one day be revealed to us in the holy City of Sion, in the City of our God, *which God has founded for ever* (Ps. xlvii. 9). But since those penetrate the deepest into the hidden things of God who abase themselves the most profoundly before Him, let us prostrate ourselves in heart and mind before this infinite Majesty; and, in order that God may look favourably upon us, let us entreat the Mother of Mercy to impetrate for us by her prayers that Holy Ghost Who filled her so abundantly when the angel had saluted her in these words which we so often address to her: *Hail, Mary!*

This uncreated Trinity—sovereign, almighty, incomprehensible—in order to give us some idea of Its infinite perfection, made on earth a created trinity, and deigned to imprint upon Its creatures an image of that ineffable Mystery which associates number with unity in so lofty and so admirable a manner.

If you desire to know what is this created trinity of which I speak, do not look either to Heaven or to Earth for it, nor to the stars nor to the elements, nor to any one of that vast multitude of created things which surround us; but look at yourselves, consider yourselves in the inmost depths of your being, and you will see it. It is your soul, your intelligence, your reason, which forms that created trinity in which is represented the uncreated Trinity. This is why in the Holy Scriptures, and in the account there given of the creation of the universe, no mention is made of the Blessed Trinity until God resolves to bring man into being. Notice that all His other works are executed by a word of command: *Let light be made; let the firmament be made* (Gen. i. 8, 6). That is a word of command. Man, however, is created in quite a different manner, and in one which has in it something far grander. God does not say: *Let man be made;* but the whole blessed and undivided Trinity pronounces by common consent this resolve: *Let Us make man to Our image and likeness* (Gen. i. 26). What is this new manner of speaking? and why is it that the Three Divine Persons only begin to declare Themselves when it is a question of forming Adam? Is it because among all living creatures man alone can boast of being the handiwork of the Trinity? Not at all; it is nothing of the sort, for all the operations of the Blessed Trinity are inseparable. Whence comes it, then, that this most glorious Trinity reveals Itself so openly in the creation of our first father, if not to make us understand that man was chosen by It from among all other creatures in order that on him the image and likeness of the Triune God might be imprinted? That is why the Three Divine Persons

meet together (if we may venture so to speak) and hold council together in order to form the rational soul of man, because each of these Three Persons was in some way to contribute a part of what was needed for the accomplishment of so great a work.

Indeed, as the Blessed Trinity has a source and fountain of Divinity (as the Greek Fathers say), a treasury of life and of intelligence which we call the Father, from which the Son and the Holy Ghost never cease to draw; so too the rational soul has its treasury, its rich storehouse, which makes it fruitful. All that the senses bring to it from without, it gathers up and stores within; it makes of those things a sort of reservoir which we call memory. And just as that infinite treasury, that is to say, the Father, contemplating His own richness, produces His Word, which is His own Image, so too does the rational soul, enriched with beautiful ideas, produce this mental word that we call the thought or the concept or the expression, which is the vivid likeness of the object known. For do we not feel that when we form in our mind a concept of any object, we form within ourselves an animated picture, which the incomparable St. Augustine calls "the child of our mind?" Finally, as, in producing in ourselves that image which gives us intelligence, we take pleasure in and love the knowledge that comes to us, so from this treasury which is the memory, and from this cognition which it produces, there arises a third thing which is called love, in which are terminated all the operations of our soul: so too from the Father Who is the Divine treasury, and from the Son Who is the subsistent term of the Divine intellection, there proceeds the Infinite Spirit Who is the subsistent term

of the mutual operation, of the mutual love of Them both. And as the Father, that eternal treasury, communicates Himself without any exhaustion of Himself, so our memory does not exhaust itself by the concepts to which it gives birth, but remains still always fruitful as God the Father is always fecund.

Now, although this image may be infinitely far from the perfection of the Original, it is still very noble and excellent, because it is the very Trinity Itself which deigned to form it in us; and hence it is that in producing man, who by the operations of his soul must in some way imitate those of the ever-adorable Trinity, this same Trinity with one accord pronounces these sacred words, so much to the glory of our nature: *Let Us make man to Our image and likeness.* It is also for that reason that the Son of God willed that the Three Divine Persons should appear in our new birth, and that we should then be consecrated in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost (Matt. xxviii. 19). How admirable are the deep counsels of Providence in the marvellous analogy of the Divine mysteries! When was man formed? At the Creation. When was he re-formed? In Holy Baptism, which is a second creation; in which the grace of Jesus Christ gives us a new birth and makes us new creatures. When we were first formed by creation, the Trinity there discovered Itself by these words: *Let Us make man to Our image and likeness.* When we are regenerated, when the Holy Ghost re-forms us in the holy waters of Baptism, all Three Persons of the Blessed Trinity are, as it were, summoned to take part in the act. The Trinity in creation; the Trinity in regeneration: is not this in order to make us understand that the

Son of God re-establishes in us the first dignity of our origin, and that He mercifully repairs in our souls the image of the adorable Trinity, which our creation had given us and which our sin had obscured?

But let us go a step further. In order that the holy and undivided Trinity might shine forth more clearly in men, our Lord Jesus Christ was pleased to make His Church an image of that Blessed Trinity, as we shall see presently. Who has taught us this great and glorious theology? Who but Jesus Christ Himself, in the words which I quoted as my text. He says: *Holy Father, keep those Whom Thou hast given Me.* Who are those whom the Father has given to the Son? They are the faithful who, being united by the Spirit of God, compose that holy society to which we give the name of Church. *Keep them,* He says, *that they may be one.* They are one, says the Son of God; that is to say, their multitude does not prevent perfect unity; and, in order to forbid any shadow of doubt as to the fact that this mysterious unity which was to gather together all the members of the body of the Church was the image of that ineffable Unity which associates the Three Divine Persons, Jesus Christ explains it in these words: *That they all may be one, as We are* (John xvii. 21); and a little later: *As Thou Father art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us;* and again: *And the glory which Thou hast given Me, I have given to them, that they may be one as We are one* (John xvii. 22). O greatness and dignity of the Church! O holy company of the faithful, which must be so perfect and complete, since Jesus Christ gives it no other model than the very Unity of the Father and the Son and of the Holy Ghost Who proceedeth

from the Father and the Son! Let them be one, says the Son of God, not as the Angels, nor as the Archangels, nor as the Cherubim, nor as the Seraphim; but *may they be one*, He says, *as We are one.* Let us understand the full meaning of these words, *As We are one;* that is, in the same being, in the same intelligence, in the same love. Thus may they be one as We are one; that is to say, one in the same being, by their new birth; one in the same intelligence, by the doctrine of truth; one in the same love, by the bond of charity. Let us ponder still more attentively this triple unity.

Although the eternal generation by which the Son proceeds from the Father, infinitely surpasses the intelligences of all mortal creatures and even of all blessed spirits, still do not let us flinch from the task of striving at least to contemplate in the bosom of the Eternal Father the mystery of that ineffable generation. Lest, however, the dazzling splendour of this light should blind us, let us regard it as it is reflected in the fair mirror of the Sacred Scriptures, which the Holy Ghost has prepared for us, so as to bring this marvel, as it were in a measure, within our reach.

The first thing which I remark in the generation of the Eternal Word is that the Father begets Him in Himself, contrary to the order in human fathers who of necessity beget their children from outside themselves. We learn from the Scriptures that the Son proceeds from the Father. Our Divine Lord says Himself: *I came out from God* (John xvi. 21). All that is produced must either have been drawn from nothingness, as the sky and the earth; or else produced from something, as are plants and animals,

That the Only-begotten Son of God should have been drawn from nothingness is what even the Arians, who denied the Divinity of the Word, never ventured to advance. Indeed, since the Eternal Word is the Son of God by nature, He cannot be drawn out of nothingness; else He would not be begotten, He would not proceed as a Son, and He Who is the true Son of God, the Son Who by a solitary and supreme exception is called in the Scriptures the Eternal Father's *own* Son, would be in no wise different from those who are His sons by adoption. Consequently it is clear that the Son of God cannot have been drawn out of nothingness; that to think or say so would be blasphemous and execrable. Since, then, He was not drawn out of nothingness, let us see whence He was begotten.

It is a necessary and inviolable law that every son must receive into himself some part of the substance of his father; that is why when we speak of a son in relation to a father, we say that he is his second self. If, then, my Divine Saviour is the Son of God, who can fail to see that He must be formed of God's own substance? But let us not here suffer any thought of earth to enter in. Let us drive far away from our mind and thoughts all that breathes of corporeal things: let us not believe that the Son of God received into Himself only a portion of the substance of the Father; for since it is essential to God to be simple and indivisible, His substance cannot suffer any partition; and consequently if the Word in this relation of sonship must of necessity partake of the substance of God His Father, He receives it undivided, it is communicated to Him whole and entire, and the Father Who produces it from the very depths

of His own being sheds it forth upon Him without any reservation or diminution. And, since the Divine nature cannot be either separated or diverted from itself, if the Son came forth outside the Father, if He were produced outside of Him, He would never partake of His essence, and He would lose the title of Son; so that, in order that He may be a Son, His Father must of necessity beget Him in Himself.

That is what we learn from the Scriptures. Tell us so, beloved Disciple, you who, lying on the bosom and close to the Sacred Heart of the Eternal Word, drank so deeply of these heavenly mysteries. *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was in God* (John i. 1); that is to say, as soon as the Word was, He was in God, He was therefore produced in God Himself. That is why He proceeds from God as His Word, as His concept, as His thought, as the inward speech by which He converses within Himself of His own infinite perfections; He cannot, then, be separated from Him. Ponder this admirable doctrine. All that begets is living; to beget is a function of life, and the life of God is intelligence; He begets then by intelligence. Now the understanding acts only within itself, it does not shed itself abroad; on the contrary, all that it meets with outside, it strives to gather up into itself: hence it is that we commonly say that we comprehend a thing, that we have got it into our mind, when we have understood it. Thus this Infinite Essence, supremely immaterial, which only lives on reason and intelligence, does not suffer anything to be begotten in Itself except through intellection; and consequently the Eternal Word, the wisdom and thought of His Father, being produced

by intelligence, is born and abides in His Father; *The same was in the beginning with God* (John i. 2).

That is what Tertullian explains to us so admirably in his *Apology*. "We say," he tells us, "that God utters this Word, and begets It in uttering It." For it is a substantial Word, which contains in Itself all the virtue, all the energy, all the substance of the Principle which produces It. "And this is why," says Tertullian, "we call this Word the Son of God, on account of the unity of substance." Later on he compares the Son of God to the ray which the sun produces without diminishing in any degree its being and without losing any of its brilliancy; and he concludes by saying that He did indeed come forth from the parent stem, but without ever withdrawing Himself from it. O my God! my soul is overwhelmed and confounded by these marvels; I lose myself, I am engulfed in this fathomless ocean of mystery; my dazzled sight, feeble and failing as it is, can no longer bear this flood of light and splendour! We must gather new strength, we must rest our sight awhile, and let it rest upon objects which are more within the range of our mortal vision.

Sacred society of the faithful, Holy Church filled with the Spirit of God, chaste Spouse of our Saviour, you represent on earth the generation of the Eternal Word in your blessed fecundity! God begets, and you beget: God (as we have said) begets in Himself; where, holy Church, do you beget your children? In your peace, in your concord, in your unity, in your bosom, and in your womb. Happy maternity of the Church! Earthly mothers indeed conceive their fruit in the womb, but they give birth to it outside that womb: on the contrary, holy Church conceives

outside her womb, she gives birth within it. An unbeliever comes to the Church, he asks to be received into the company of the faithful, the Church instructs him, catechizes him; he is not yet in her womb, he is not yet in her unity; she does not yet give birth, but she conceives: thus she does not conceive in her womb; as soon only as she gives birth to us we begin to be in her unity. Thus it is, holy Church, that you beget us, imitating in this generation the Eternal Father. To beget is to incorporate; to beget your children is not to produce them outside of yourself, it is to make of them one and the same body with yourself; and as the Father, begetting His Son, makes Him one and the same God with Himself, so too do you make the children whom you beget what you yourself are, by forming Jesus Christ in them. And as the Father begets the Son by communicating to Him His own being, so do you beget your children by communicating to them that new being which grace has given to you in our Lord Jesus Christ, *that they may be one as the Father and the Son are one.* What I say of the Father and of the Son, I say also of the Holy Ghost; for They are Three, and yet One and the same. That is why St. Augustine says: "In God there is number; in God there is no number: when you count the Three Persons, you see a number; you ask yourself what it is, there is no longer any number, the answer to your question is that it is one only God. Because these Divine Persons are Three, there is what seems to be number; when you try to find what this number is, it escapes you, nothing is to be found but simple Unity." So too it is with the Church. Reckon up the faithful; you see a number. What are the

faithful?—there is no longer any number; they are all one and the same body in our Lord: *there is no longer either Greek or Barbarian, Roman or Scythian, but one only Lord Jesus Christ, Who is all in all* (Coloss. iii. 11); *that they may be one as We are one.*

Let us see, then, from the Scriptures, how the Son and the Holy Ghost receive continually into Themselves the life and the intelligence of the Father; and, in the first place as regarding the Son, this is how He speaks of Himself in St. John's Gospel: *Amen, amen I say unto you: the Son cannot do anything of Himself, but what He seeth the Father doing; for whatsoever He doth those things the Son also doth in like manner; for the Father loveth the Son and showeth Him whatsoever He doth* (John v. 19, 20). When we hear those words, our feeble imagination immediately pictures to itself the Father working, and the Son regarding His works, almost like an apprentice who learns by watching his master at work. But, if we would understand the Divine secrets, let us dash to the ground these vain and material idols which the habits and customs of earth have set up in our hearts; let us, I say, break them to pieces and crumble them into dust by the thunderbolt of the Scriptures. If the Father were the first to act, and if the Son watched His doings and then acted Himself in imitation of His Father, it would follow of necessity that their operations would be separate. Now we learn from the Scriptures that all that the Father does is done by the Son: *All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made, that was made* (John i. 3); and that is why He Himself tells us that *all that the Father does*

the Son does in like manner. If the Son does all the works which His Father does, Their actions cannot possibly be separate; and the Son does not content Himself with telling us that He does all that the Father does, but He says: All that the Father does the Son does in like manner. The characters which the hand forms, the pen also forms, but not in the same manner: the hand, as the moving cause, forms them; the pen, as the instrument which is moved. God forbid that we should believe it to be thus with the Father and the Son. *All that the Father does,* says our Lord, *that the Son does also do in like manner;* that is to say, with the same power, with the same wisdom, and by the same operation.

How is it, O my Saviour, that Thou sayest: *The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He seeth the Father doing, and the Father showeth the Son all things which Himself doth?* What is this marvellous manner by which Thou dost contemplate Thy Father, by which Thou seest in Him all that Thou doest and all that He does? How is it that He speaks to Thee and teaches Thee? And since Thou art God, even as He is God, whence comes it that Thou dost nothing of Thyself? Who shall unveil these mysteries for us? Let us listen again to the words of the great St. Augustine: "The Son," he says, "does nothing of Himself, because He is not of Himself: He Who communicates to Him His essence, communicates to Him also His operation; and although He receives all from His Father, He is none the less equal to the Father, because the Father Who gives Him all things gives Him with them His equality." The Father gives Him all that He Himself is, and begets Him as great as Himself, because He gives Him His own

greatness. Thus it is, O Heavenly Father, that Thou teachest Thy Son, because Thou givest Him without reserve the same knowledge that is in Thyself.

But let us understand this mystery according to the measure of comprehension which is given to us, and as far as God has been pleased to reveal it to us in the Scriptures. It is clear that he who teaches wishes to communicate his knowledge. Take for example those preachers whom the Spirit of God has ordained to preach sound doctrine to the people; why do they go up into the pulpit? is it not to pass on the light which God has given them, pouring it into the minds and hearts of their hearers? This is the aim and object of him that teaches. He opens his heart to those that listen to him; he tries to make them like himself; he wishes them to adopt his sentiments and share his thoughts. Thus, he who teaches and he who is taught ought to meet each other soul to soul, and share with each other the same Divine illumination. Consequently the method of teaching tends to unity of mind in knowledge and doctrine, and I repeat as an undeniable truth that he who desires to teach desires to communicate his knowledge. But neither nature nor art can do more than sketch this work, this communication is very imperfect, this unity is only as it were commenced. Absolute communication of knowledge can only be found in God Himself; there it is that the Father teaches the Son in a manner which is indeed infinitely admirable, because He communicates to Him His own knowledge; there it is that perfect unity of mind between the Father and the Son is effected, because the life and intelligence, the reason and light of the Father, are so present in the Son that they form

in each of these Divine Persons one and the same life, intelligence, and spirit. That is why the Father Who teaches and the Son Who is taught are equally adorable; because the Son receives this same knowledge from the Father, Who in bestowing it suffers no loss.

And do not let us imagine that when the Father teaches the Son, He communicates to Him knowledge as something superadded to and perfecting His being. As the Father begets Him perfect, He gives Him all in begetting Him; more than this, if we can grasp the fact, "to beget Him and to teach Him are the same thing," as St. Augustine says. You will tell me that to beget and to teach are two widely different terms. That is perfectly true in the case of created beings, in whom undoubtedly to beget is not an act of intelligence; but in God Whose life is intelligence, Who begets consequently by intelligence, we must not be astonished if in teaching He begets. For if He teaches His Eternal Son by communicating to Him His own knowledge, He begets Him in communicating that knowledge; because, in God, to be is to know, to be is to understand, as theology teaches: whence it follows evidently that even the fact that the Father teaches the Son proves the unity of the Father and the Son in the life of intelligence. It is the same with the Holy Ghost, since He proceeds from the Father and the Son with the same perfection which the Son receives from His Father. Thus the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, the same Light, the same Majesty, the same Intelligence, live all together in understanding, and all together are but one and the same Life.

Holy Father, says the Son of God, *keep in Thy name those whom Thou hast given Me, that they may*

be one as We also are one (John xvii. 11); that is to say, that they may be, as We are, united in the same life of intelligence. But can we indeed hope that all the faithful should be united in the life of intelligence? Yes, certainly, we ought to hope so. Look at the blessed spirits who reign in Heaven with Jesus Christ; what is their life? what is their light? *Their light*, says the Apocalypse, *is the Lamb* (Apoc. xxi. 23), that is to say, the uncreated Word Who made Himself a Victim offered for the sins of the whole world; the light therefore of the Blessed is this Word, this Word begotten by the Father through all eternity. But this Word is not a light that is kindled outside their souls, it is an infinite light which shines within them. In this light they see the Son, because it is the Son Himself: in this light they see the Father, because it is the splendour of the Father; *He that seeth Me*, says the Son of God, *seeth the Father also* (John xiv. 9): in this light they see the Holy Ghost, because the Holy Ghost proceeds from it. In this light the Blessed contemplate themselves, because they see themselves better in it than in themselves; they see therein living ideas, they see therein the reasons of created things, reasons eternally abiding. And just as in this life we know causes by their effects, unity by multitude, the invisible by the visible; there, in that Divine Word, Who is in the Blessed, Who is their Life, their Light, they see multitude even in Unity, the visible in the Invisible, the diversity of effects in that infinitely bounteous Cause Who drew them out of nothingness, that is to say, in the Word Who is the idea of all things, Who is the sovereign reason by which all things were made. In this Word the Blessed see; they see and they live;

and they all live in the same life, because they all live in this same Word. O sight! O life! O happiness! thus it is that the Blessed live, *that they all may be one as the Father and the Son are one.*

But how is it with us? Do we, here below, mourning and weeping in this valley of tears, do we live one and the same life by intelligence? Yes indeed, do not doubt it. This Son of God, this Eternal Word, this Life, this Light, this Intelligence Who enlightens the Blessed and in so doing makes them live a Divine life, does not He shine also in our hearts? is He not in the depth of our souls to open up in them a well-spring of eternal life? Let us understand this truth by what we are now doing here in this church; and if we do understand it we are beginning here on earth our Paradise, since we are beginning one with another to live on that living word which nourishes and keeps alive all the Blessed. I preach this word to you according to my ability, according to what the Holy Ghost has taught me concerning it: I make it ring in your ears; but can I make it penetrate into the depths of your hearts? No, that is no human work. If you hear it and if you love it, it is the Son of God Who is speaking to you, it is He Who is preaching to you noiselessly in that deep retreat, that inaccessible secret cell of your own hearts, into which only His word and His voice can penetrate. If you hear Him, you live, and you live in that same Word in Whom the Blessed live; you live in Him, you live on Him, and you all live one and the same life, because you all drink together at the same source of life. O sacred unity of the faithful! If, Christians, we all live in and by this Word, let us take care that we are closely bound together by charity.

O holy and admirable teaching! Let us live in such a manner that this teaching may not be barren and unfruitful in our hearts; let us not render such great mysteries profitless to ourselves. If the Holy Ghost is in us, if He plants charity in our souls, if He makes us like to Himself, let us lift up our hearts and minds, and let us learn in the Holy Ghost what ought to be the laws of our mutual charity. The Holy Ghost is a pure love, which suffers no earthly admixture: so too let us love one another in God, fulfilling thus the words of our Divine Master: *Holy Father, let them be one in Us.* The Holy Ghost is a constant love, because He is an eternal love: so too let our affection be constant, let it never grow cold; let us obey the command given us in the Scriptures: *Let charity abide in you* (Heb. xiii. 1). The Holy Ghost is a sincere love; because He proceeds from the depths of the heart, from the very depths even of the Divine essence: so too let our charity be sincere, let it be free from any taint of simulation or pretence; for St. Paul says: *Speak ye the truth every man with his neighbour, for ye are members one of another* (Eph. iv. 25). Finally, the Holy Ghost is a disinterested love. What makes self-interest is those unfortunate words, *mine* and *thine;* and since all is in common between the Father and the Son, Their love is infinitely disinterested: so too let us consider that all is in common among the faithful, and let us so purify our affections that they may be wholly disinterested, so that we Christians *may be one.**

Assuredly, if the Son of God was pleased to tell us

* "According to a German epigram, Socialism says, 'What is thine is mine'; Christianity says, 'What is mine is thine': the difference is infinite."—*T.P.'s Weekly.*

that He desired us to be one as brethren, we ought to respect in one another that sacred name and the tie of fraternal fellowship. If He had simply required us to live in mutual harmony of intercourse, like those who are enrolled in one and the same body of militia, under the Standard of His holy Cross, we ought to be ashamed not to be all united together under the command of so Divine a Captain. If He had only told us that we are members of the same body, we ought to meditate day and night upon these words of St. Paul: *If one member of the body suffer, all the other members suffer with it* (1 Cor. xii. 26). But since He passes above and beyond the heavens and all the heavenly intelligences, and gives us as a model of our unity the very Unity of the Father and the Son, what language could express the perfection of that union which ought to exist amongst us Christians, or the magnitude of our sin if we break the sacred tie of brotherly love which ought to be as firm and enduring as the great Pattern set before us?

But, as though it were too small a thing to set before the whole company of the faithful the greatest of all mysteries to be the model of their unity, our Divine Lord does more; He seals this sacred unity by another incomprehensible mystery, the mystery of the Holy Eucharist. We all come to the same Table, we there partake of the same Bread of Life, which is the Bread of communion, the Bread of charity and of peace; we bind ourselves in a mutual fellowship by a covenant made at the Holy Altar and sealed by the Blood of our Divine Saviour: and yet—terrible sacrilege as it is—we fail every day to keep this sacred pledge, and constantly have words of slander on our lips and envy or antipathy in our hearts. The Saviour

says in His Gospel: *By this shall all men know that you are My disciples, if you love one another* (John xiii. 35); and He prays thus to His Father: *That they all may be perfected in one, so that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me* (John xvii. 21, 23).

O accursed faithlessness of those who, though they glory in the name of Christian, are at enmity and war with one another! The Church is stained with the blood of her children, and that blood is shed not by strangers but by other members of that great and consecrated family.* And as though so much war and carnage were not enough to satiate our pitiless inhumanity, we tear one another to pieces in the same cities, the same houses, under the same roofs, by our irreconcilable enmities. Every day we pray for peace,

* "What a terrible barbarism it is for one nation to make sport, so to speak, of the very life of another nation, utterly regardless of all that is dearest to its people, their laws, their customs, their peace of mind and body! Just as no head of a family ought ever to be so carried away by his desire of aggrandising his own house as to wish to disturb the peace and liberty of the public of which he and that family are only members, so, too, it is mad, brutal, pernicious conduct on the part of any ruler of a nation to glory in increasing the power of his own subjects by disturbing the peace and liberty of neighbouring States. A nation is no less a member of the human race, which embraces all society, than is one individual family a member of a particular nation. Each individual owes infinitely more to the whole human race, which is the great universal country, than to his own native land."—FÉNELON.

"You are soon to become the King of a great Kingdom," said Louis XIV. from his death-bed to the boy that was to succeed him. "That which I recommend to you most strenuously is never to forget your obligations towards God. Strive to preserve peace with your neighbours. I have been too fond of war. Never imitate me in that."

"The Catholic Church is the only Church in which nationality means nothing; in which the individuality of a man counts for nothing at all; in which all those partitions between nations, between persons, are broken down. One divine society containing truth equally true for all nations, for all times."—MGR. R. H. BENSON.

and every day we ourselves make war. Look at the continual strife that goes on; parent against parent, brother against brother. We seem to have forgotten our Christianity; we despise the Gospel which is a discipline of peace. Yet we wish one another peace, the word is continually on our lips: and at the same time, by our dissensions, we are setting up the kingdom of Satan who is the author of discord, and driving away the Spirit of Peace Who is the Spirit of God. Ah! my Divine Saviour, if it was Thy desire that the sacred union and mutual love of the faithful should be a sign of Thy mission, what are Christians doing now, if not publishing to the world that Thy Father has not sent Thee, that the Gospel is a chimera, and that all Thy mysteries are but so many fables?

X

THE BIRTH OF CHRIST

By Bourdaloue

The consideration of the mystery of our Saviour's birth is calculated to stir up in us a salutary fear, together with a solid and internal joy. The sight of this Saviour lying in a manger affords us powerful motives for the one and the other. If you are of those who, seduced by false maxims, quit the way of salvation for the way of the world, be afraid, because this mystery will lay open to you afflicting truths. If you are, or would be, one of those who seek God in spirit and truth, be glad, because this mystery will reveal to you infinite treasures of grace and mercy.

A Mystery of Fear.

The salvation of man must needs always begin with his fear of the Lord. It is with reason, therefore, that, proclaiming this great mystery of the Nativity, I should point out the most powerful motives for this wholesome fear. Fear, then, ye men of the world; that is, ye who, intoxicated with the spirit of the world, lead a life conformable to its laws and maxims: fear, because the very Saviour Who is born to you, Saviour as He is, is for you the reverse of a Saviour: fear, because He is a Saviour but a Saviour

Who comes to be your shame and condemnation: fear, because this Saviour, incapable of indifference, if He does not save you, must necessarily ruin you.

You want Him to exert His saving power in your regard; but, at the same time, by a strange opposition of sentiment and conduct, you are not solicitous that He free you from your sins. For this, nevertheless, and for this only, He came as our Saviour. If He free you not from your sins, and if, far from desiring to be freed from their dominion, you be infatuated with your slavery, this Divine Saviour is no more for you than a merely nominal Saviour, and all the adoration you pay Him is delusion and hypocrisy. *Thou shalt call His name Jesus*, says the Angel to Joseph; and the reason given is, *because He shall save His people from their sins* (Matt. i.). He comes not to redeem us from the adversities and misfortunes of the present life; we should be unworthy of the profession and title of Christians if we made that the criterion of His grace and power of saving us. But He comes to deliver us from the corruptions, the irregularities, and the errors of the world; from the yoke of our passions; from the concupiscence of the flesh; from an overweening opinion of our own worth; from criminal associations, hatred and aversions, corroding rancour, and malignant jealousy. These are our enemies; and none but a God had the power of rescuing us from such captivity. Let us cry out, with the Prophet: *Hasten, O Lord, lift me up from the abyss into which I am fallen.*

We desire that this God, made flesh, should save us, but we desire it without our being given any trouble. That is another contradiction and another motive for fear; for He is our Saviour only on the

condition that we co-operate with Him in the work of our salvation. St. Augustine observes that He made us indeed, but will not save us, without our own concurrence: He requires that the work of salvation, or rather the fulfilment of this great work, depend upon ourselves, and that we share in the labour without priding ourselves on having done so. As Saviour, He did penance for us, but still requires that we do penance for ourselves. As Saviour, He prayed, suffered, and merited for us; but He requires that our prayers and tears and works, sanctified by His, accomplish in us the work of Redemption, of which He is the author, and which, without our co-operation, He will not accomplish. As Saviour, He became a victim for us in the crib, where He began His voluntary immolation; but He requires that we be ready to immolate ourselves. It is therefore necessary, in order to be saved, that we take pains ourselves. This He made a law; a law which St. Paul so exactly complied with that he said that *he fulfilled in his flesh what was wanting in the sufferings of Christ* (Col. i.).

In fine, you want Him to save you, but you would not have it by the means that He has pointed out to you. Although these means have been concerted and resolved on in the unerring decree of His eternal wisdom, they are displeasing to you; although they have been sanctioned in His sacred person and authorised by His example, you do not relish them. And what are they? Detachment from the world and its vanities, poverty of spirit, humility of heart, mortification of the senses, austerity of life. That language is grating to you. You would have means more proportioned to your worldly notions and more

agreeable to your inclinations: and I say that for that reason you ought to fear; because it is an undoubted truth that this Incarnate God will not save you by other means than those that He Himself has specified, and that those which He has specified will not save you so long as you follow your worldly ideas and inclinations.

Tell me, if Almighty God had sent a Saviour different from Him in Whom we believe and hope; that is, if a Saviour had come from Heaven, favourable to corrupt nature and diametrically opposite to Him Whom we adore; if, instead of declaring that this Messiah was a poor and humble Saviour born in a stable, I were to assure you that you had been greatly mistaken, He being quite of an opposite character; that His birth was attended with pomp and splendour, with opulence and abundance, with all the ease and pleasures of life; that to those means He had attached your eternal welfare, and upon them had undertaken to found His religion; if (by a reversal of things, which indeed is impossible but which we may imagine) the case were thus, and this supposition were a reality, tell me what you would have to reform in your conduct, or to correct and amend in your sentiments, in order to conform to this new gospel. In changing your belief would you be obliged to change your conduct? Would you find yourselves under the necessity of renouncing your present state for a state of perfection which this Saviour would point out to you? Or, on the contrary, without any alteration from what you are, would you not, in that supposition, be perfect Christians? In such case might I not say with propriety: "Fear not; for behold I bring you tidings of great joy:

a Saviour is born to you; a Saviour to your liking and after your desires; a Saviour Whose religion tallies so perfectly with your taste and maxims and with the rules of life the world prescribes; a Saviour Whose principles will allow you to give full scope to your passions, and Who, far from contradicting, will approve and authorise the indulgence of those passions? As He is such a Saviour, be comforted." Should I not, I say, be justified in addressing you in that strain? And would you not, filled with a secret joy, say that He was the Saviour and God we wanted? Alas! Christians, I own you would, in that new system, have good reason to rejoice. But you are too intelligent not to see that what in that case would give you comfort ought to fill you now with apprehension. My duty obliges me, as I preach a contrary Gospel, to use also a contrary language. At the hazard of disturbing the joy of the Church, which is good and holy, I must disturb yours, which, considering the blindness with which you proceed, is false and presumptuous. I must bid you be afraid, nay, tremble with fear, because a Saviour is born to you, but a Saviour Who stands in opposition to your inclinations, an enemy to the world and to worldly enjoyments—a poor, humble, suffering Saviour. Afflicting truth! But for whom? For you, worldling; that is, for you, wealthy man, possessed of riches and intoxicated with your fortune; for you, ambitious man, infatuated with splendour and an admirer only of earthly pomp; for you, sensual and voluptuous man, whose love is unmeasurable though confined to yourself, and whose only occupation is the gratifying of your passions and the indulging of your lusts.

A Mystery of Joy.

But let us consider the mystery of comfort which is discernible in the birth of the Man-God.

The weak are selected to confound the power of the great; the simple to confound the arguments of the wise; the mean and despicable, according to the notion of the world, to confound that which is most illustrious and most eminent in the world. Such was the commencement of the Christian religion; such was the original of God's Church, which was shut up within the narrow limits of a stable, since only there was Jesus Christ as yet known. And this, ye great ones of the world who hear me, would have been sufficient to plunge you into the deepest affliction, if God's amiable Providence had not provided for your wants. Be of good heart and convinced of the immensity of His mercies; proceed to enjoy the comfort of the tidings of great joy. How exposed soever you may be to the vice and corruption of the world, and how remote soever you may seem to be from the kingdom of God, Jesus Christ rejects you not—Jesus Christ Who came into the world to draw you closer to Himself. How contrary soever to that of the Blessed Jesus your condition in life may appear to be, it is still in your power, remaining what you are, to resemble Him in holiness. How dangerous soever human grandeur may be, and whatever malediction has been pronounced against riches, they may serve you as the means of honouring Jesus Christ and rendering Him the particular worship He expects.

Although Jesus Christ, by a special choice, would be born in lowliness and humiliation, He cannot be said to have therefore proscribed the great ones of

the earth; nor am I afraid of offending your delicacy by saying that from His very birth, far from despising them, He sought after them and brought them to a knowledge of Himself and even indulged them in a special attachment to Him. This incontestably appears from the Gospel; for when this saving God calls shepherds and the poor to surround His cradle, He calls also the Magi, powerful and opulent, nay, dignified with royalty, if we may believe tradition. When an angel from Heaven is deputed to the shepherds, a resplendent star is made to guide the Magi; when the shepherds quit their flocks to adore and acknowledge Him, the Magi quit their country, possessions and rank: under the veil of human infancy He makes His Divinity known to both; He excludes not the great by preferring the little to them. Ye men of the world, whoever you are or whatever your rank in life may be, your condition debars you not from God, nor does your God condemn it. It is not a bar between you and your God, for He supplies it with abundant graces; your God condemns it not, for He sanctified it in the Magi, and reformed it in you. He condemns the abuse and irregularity of your condition; He condemns the luxury, the effeminacy, the hardheartedness, the impiety of your condition, not the condition itself. As the God of all ranks, Who came for the salvation of all mankind, from His cradle (in which He already performs the functions of a Saviour) He demands that great and small, rich and poor, masters and servants, appear in His retinue.*

* This consideration of Bourdaloue's disfavours the support sometimes claimed for their teaching by Socialists from his sermon on Riches.

But, after all, what analogy can His poverty bear to opulence, His abasement to grandeur, His distress to the ease and comforts of life? To this I answer by a second proposition which I have already advanced: it is in your power, remaining what you are, to resemble in holiness the Infant Jesus. You may, as Christians, be at the same time great and humble, rich but poor in spirit, powerful and yet of a meek and generous heart. Now the moment you join humility to greatness, meekness to power, and detachment to the possession and enjoyment of riches, your state no longer conflicts with that of your Redeemer. On the contrary, you have by these means the advantage of being able to conform most perfectly to this model of the predestined. For the character of the Saviour is not merely to be poor and humble, but to be great and humble at the same time; or, rather, to be humble and to be greatness itself, as, notwithstanding His humility, He is the Son of the Most High. A great man who, without derogating from his quality, practises the humility prescribed by his religion; a great man who is little in his own eyes and is perpetually mindful that He is a sinner and mortal, and who walks before His God with respect and fear; a great man who can say, like David, *Lord, my heart is not puffed up, nor are my eyes haughty*,—a great man actuated by these sentiments is a perfect imitator of the great God Whose adorable abasement we commemorate on Christmas Day. A great man in these dispositions is a true Christian, a Christian that humbles himself like the Divine Infant.

My third proposition was that it depends on the rich man himself to make his riches serve to pay the Infant Jesus the particular worship He expects. As

God and humble, He demands honour and glory; as God and poor, He requires assistance and relief.

As God and humble, He demands honour and glory; and accordingly He seeks worshippers from among the Gentiles. But what sort of worshippers? Men distinguished by their dignity, who, prostrate and lowly in His presence, do Him more honour and procure Him more glory than the shepherds of Judea with all their zeal. Nothing, in fact, can do Him greater honour and procure Him more glory than the homage of the great. Why were you invested with authority in the world? why did God place you in your present elevation? What is it not in your power to do for Him? To you it is owing that the doctrine and religion of this God-Man are held in veneration on earth.†

As God and poor, He demands relief; no longer for Himself, but for His members, which are the poor. Without having, like the Magi, to go a long distance to find Him and offer Him gifts, you may find Him in the midst of you. The poor who surround you and whom you see, and still more those whom you do not see and who cannot approach you, are in your regard the same Jesus Christ to Whom the Magi made an offering of gold and frankincense. We learn from the doctrine of faith that what is given to the poor is given to Jesus Christ, and with more merit when put into their hands than if put into His without any intervention. Hence your riches can become salutary and can lose the characteristic of reprobation which the Scripture gives them. From being treasures of iniquity and obstacles to salvation, they can be made

† "The rich who love knowledge and virtue, who reverence God and man, are a general blessing."—BISHOP J. L. SPALDING.

material for that most excellent virtue, charity. Jesus Christ (says St. Chrysostom) is too just and faithful to execrate riches which He Himself solicits at your hands. *Blessed is he*, cries the royal Psalmist, *who understandeth concerning the needy and the poor!* And I say the same thing, and with greater reason, for it is especially for the Christian that the poor are a mystery of faith. But, coming to the root of the matter, I add: Blessed is he who understandeth concerning the poverty and humility of a God made Man.

XI

THE DIGNITY OF THE POOR*

By Bossuet

"The last shall be first, and the first shall be last" (Matt. xx. 16).

"He shall spare the poor and needy, and shall save the souls of the poor" (Ps. lxxi. 13).

Although the declaration of our Saviour Jesus Christ, that *the last shall be first and the first last*, will not have its perfect fulfilment until the General Resurrection, when the just shall be called to fill the first places and the wicked shall be cast out into exterior darkness, yet even now in this present life that admirable reversal of all human conditions has already begun, and we see the first instances of such a reversal in the institution of the Church. That marvellous city, whose foundations were laid by God Himself, has its laws and regulations by which it is governed. But as Jesus Christ, its Divine Founder, came on earth to overthrow the order established there by human pride, it follows of necessity that the polity of the Church is directly opposed to that of the world; and this opposition is chiefly observable in three things. First, in the world the rich always predominate, every kind of advantage falls to their

* Sermon preached at Paris, in 1659, to the *Daughters of Providence*.

share, they secure and keep the high places of earth: in the Kingdom of Jesus pre-eminence belongs to the poor, who are the first-born of the Church and her true children. Secondly, in the world the poor are subject to the rich, and seem only born to serve them, while in the Holy Church the rich are only admitted into her fold on condition that they serve the poor. Thirdly, in the world favours and privileges are for the wealthy and the powerful; the poor have no share in them except as dependants of the rich: but in the Church of Jesus Christ graces and blessings are for the poor, and it is only through the poor as a medium that such privileges fall to the lot of the rich. Thus, even in this present life, do we already see the fulfilment of the Gospel assertion that *the last shall be first and the first last.* The poor, who in the world are the last, in the Church are the first, and the rich, who imagine everything to be their due, and who trample the poor under foot, only have a place in the Church that they may serve the poor; the graces of the New Covenant belong by right to the poor, and it is only through their hands that the rich receive them. That is assuredly an important lesson for all you who are rich in this world's goods! It should teach you what is your duty towards the poor; how you should honour their state, relieve their necessities, share their privileges.*

* "May a Catholic be a Socialist? (*a*) 'Yes, for socialism is an economic system, and hence is not concerned with religion.' (*b*) 'No, for socialism opposes Christian morality and religion, and has been condemned by the Church.' Both these answers are but half-truths, and therefore incorrect. They make the matter entirely too simple. Socialism is at once a social movement, a social philosophy, and a contemplated socio-industrial system. The question may be answered in the form of the following summary and conclusion of our study. While a Catholic is not justified

St. John Chrysostom makes use of a striking image, in order to teach us the advantages of poverty over riches. He represents to us two cities, the one inhabited solely by the rich, the other by the poor; and then goes very carefully into the question, which of the two is the more powerful? Were we to consult the majority of men as to this matter, there is very little doubt that the rich would carry the day. The great St. Chrysostom, however, decides in favour of the poor; and bases his conclusion on this reasoning.

either in taking an active part in the present socialist movement or in accepting the scientific socialist philosophy, he may, subject to the very improbable hypothesis that it would be practicable, believe in essential economic socialism."—Rev. Professor J. A. Ryan, D.D.

"If our first father and his posterity had remained in the state of innocence, there would be no need of property in the means of production; this, I believe, is the teaching of all theologians. Private property in capital, therefore, is the consequence of inordinate appetites, not a necessity of human nature as such.

"There are two hypothetical principles, if I may call them so, as to which Socialists and Catholics are in perfect agreement:—(1) That in proportion as men become unselfish and moral, under whatever influence, it is reasonable to limit private property in the means of production and of transport; and (2) that the limitation might be made complete if all inordinate selfishness were to cease. The essential difference between us is:—(1) That they regard man as being now less selfish than we believe him to be; and (2) that while they look forward with confidence to a golden age and universal garden of Eden, we have no hope that Astraea will ever come back to earth."—Rev. Professor Walter M'Donald, D.D.

"Socialism means the control of the means of production by the political officers of the community, or, to put it in ordinary language, by the politicians."—Hilaire Belloc.

"I propose to say a little on the agreement, but more on the differences, between a Socialist Commonwealth and a Religious Order. . . . Without the religious influences kept at work all life long upon every member of the Religious Order, life in the Order would be impossible. But, it seems, no education is needed to be a Socialist (though it must be said that the Fabians are wiser on this point). Only an Act of Parliament or two, and we shall all change our natures."—Joseph Rickaby, S.J., *Political and Moral Essays*, v.

The city of the rich, he says, would indeed be far the more magnificent, the more brilliant, the more showy, but it would be wanting in stability, its very foundations would be insecure. Abundance, being the enemy of labour, incapable of self-restraint and discipline, and therefore always eagerly on the search for pleasures and sensual enjoyments, would corrupt the minds of men and enervate their courage by luxury, pride and sloth. Thus the fine arts would be neglected, the land would be imperfectly cultivated, the strenuous labour by which the human race is kept in existence would be absolutely abandoned, and this splendid city, without the interference of any outside enemy, would of itself fall to pieces, ruined by its own wealth and prosperity. On the other hand, in the city inhabited only by the poor, industrious necessity, fertile in invention and mother of all useful arts, would lead the minds of men to serious application by the pressure of want and the stern requirements of an indigent laborious life; would sharpen their wits by study; would inspire them with manly vigour by the exercise of patience; and, sparing herself no exertion, would achieve those great works which of necessity demand great labour. That is the substance of what St. John Chrysostom says on the subject of these two very different cities, making it a reason for giving preference to poverty.*

But, speaking of things as they really are, we know that the distinction drawn between these two cities is really only a pleasing fiction. Cities, which are bodies politic, demand, quite as much as the human

* "We should be quite willing to abolish luxury, but to abolish honest, industrious, self-denying poverty would be to destroy the soil upon which mankind produces the virtues."—ANDREW CARNEGIE, *The Gospel of Wealth.*

character does, variety and mingling of component parts; so much so that according to all rules of human polity this City of the Poor cannot possibly exist except in imagination. It appertains to the Saviour alone, and to the polity of Heaven, to build for us a city which should be truly the city of the poor. This city is Holy Church; and if you ask me why I call her the city of the poor, I will tell you in a very few words. According to her first plan, she was built for the poor only, and they are the true citizens of that blessed city which Holy Scripture calls *the City of God.* Strange as this teaching may possibly appear to you, it is none the less true; and in order to convince you of this, I would call your attention to one striking difference existing between the Synagogue and the Church. Almighty God promised temporal blessings to the Synagogue, whereas (as the Psalmist says) all the glory of the Christian Church is hidden and interior: *All the glory of the King's daughter is within* (Ps. xliv. 14). *God give thee,* said Isaac to his son Jacob, *the dew of heaven and the fatness of the earth* (Gen. xxvi. 39). That is the blessing of the Synagogue. And who does not know that in the Old Testament God only promises His servants to prolong their days, to enrich their families, to multiply their flocks and herds, to bless their lands and their inheritance? According to those promises, it is very easy to understand that, wealth and abundance being the portion of the Synagogue, it must of necessity be composed of powerful and opulent citizens. But it is not thus with the Church. Among the promises of the Gospel, none are to be found of those temporal blessings which had attracted sensual minds or amused childish ones,

Jesus Christ substituted for them crosses and afflictions; and by this marvellous change the last became first, and the first last, because the rich who were the first in the Synagogue cease to have any rank at all in the Church, and the poor and needy are its true citizens.

Although this diversity in the ordering of God under the Old and the New Covenant is based upon the most sublime reasons, which it would take too long to go into here, we may, in passing, say this. As under the Old Dispensation God condescended to manifest Himself to His people with all external signs of majesty and splendour, it was fitting that the Synagogue, His spouse, should be distinguished by all possible outward marks of greatness and dignity; but it was very different in the New Dispensation, in which the Eternal God veiled His majesty and power under the form of a servant. The Church, His mystical body, must, then, be an image of His lowliness, and bear upon Her the sign and mark of the voluntary self-annihilation of Her Divine Head. Is not that the reason why this same humbled and despised God, desiring as He says *that His house should be filled* (Luke xiv. 23), bids His servants go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city and bring in—whom? *The poor and the weak, the blind and the lame* (Luke xiv. 21). It is with these and such as these that He would fill His house. He desires to see none there who are not weak, because they alone are signed with His own sign, the Cross and its weakness. The Church of Jesus Christ then is, properly speaking, the city of the poor. The rich, being as such in the train of the world and stamped with the impress of the world's coinage, are only

admitted as it were on sufferance into that City of God which belongs of right to the poor and needy, who are signed with the sign of the Son of God. This is why the Psalmist calls them God's poor: *Thy poor* (Ps. lxxi. 2). Why God's poor? He calls them thus prophetically; because under the New Covenant it has pleased God to adopt them and endow them with a special prerogative.

In fact, was it not to them the Saviour was sent? God, He says, has sent Me *to preach the Gospel to the poor* (Luke iv. 18). Again, is it not to the poor He speaks in that first sermon preached on the holy Mount, when, not deigning to address the rich except to anathematize their pride, He pronounces the Divine words which are for those whom He is going to evangelize: *Blessed are ye poor, for yours is the Kingdom of Heaven?* (Luke vi. 20). If, then, it is to them that Heaven belongs, Heaven which is the Kingdom of God in eternity, it is to them the Church, which is the Kingdom of God in time, also belongs; and consequently they were the first to enter it: *for you see,* says St. Paul, *that there are not in the Church many wise according to the world, not many mighty, not many noble, but the foolish things of the world hath God chosen* (1 Cor. i. 26, 28). And if in its earliest days the rich were received into it, at their very entrance they stripped themselves of all their goods, casting them down at the feet of the Apostles, so that they might come into the Church (which was the city of the poor) with all the marks of poverty upon them, so absolutely was it the will and design of the Holy Ghost at the very foundation of Christianity to establish the high prerogative of the poor, the members of Jesus Christ.

I might indeed establish the pre-eminence of the poor by many other convincing reasons which would prove to you that they are the true children of the Church, and that it was principally for them that this spiritual city was built. But it would be better to draw some instruction, to gather some fruit from this most salutary doctrine. It should teach us to respect the poor and needy as our elder brethren in the family of Jesus Christ, and as chosen by His Heavenly Father to be the citizens of His Church, the City of God,—citizens who, bearing as they do His own most undoubted marks, are also His most valued members. It is from the Apostle St. James that we learn that important truth. *Hearken*, he says, *my dearest brethren; hath not God chosen the poor of this world, that they might be rich in faith, and heirs of the Kingdom which He has promised to those who love Him?* And yet, he goes on to say, *you dare to despise the poor!* (James ii. 5-6).

St. James, as you see, in this passage is trying to impress upon us the eminent dignity of the poor and the high prerogative of their vocation. God, he says, has chosen them in a special manner to be rich in faith and inheritors of His Kingdom. And from this we may, with the same Apostle, conclude that it would be most deplorable blindness on our part to be wanting in respect and consideration and even reverence for the poor whom God Himself has so highly honoured by the pre-eminence He gives them in His Church.

St. Paul sets us an example in this matter. Writing to the Romans about the alms which he was going to carry to the faithful in Jerusalem, he says: *I beseech you, brethren, through our Lord Jesus Christ,*

and by the charity of the Holy Ghost, that you help me in your prayers for me to God, that the oblation of my service may be acceptable in Jerusalem to the saints (Rom. xv. 30-31). See how he treats the poor; how respectfully, how courteously! He says not a word of the alms that he is taking to them, nor of the help he is going to give them; he only speaks of the service which he hopes to render them. *Pray to God,* he says, *that my service may be acceptable to them.* What is the meaning of the great Apostle? why must he take so many precautions to induce the faithful to accept an alms? The explanation of his mode of speaking is the great dignity of the poor. There are two motives for giving: we do it either to gain affection, or to relieve want; either as the result of esteem, or from a feeling of pity: in the one case we give a present, in the other we bestow an alms. As regards alms, we generally think that it is sufficient simply to give; in the matter of presents, we take rather more trouble, and there is a certain innocent art in the way of giving which doubles the value of the gift. This is the way in which St. Paul assists the poor. He does not regard them simply as unfortunate people who must be helped; but in them, from the very fact of their misery, he recognizes the most honourable members of the mystical body of Christ, the first-born of the Church. Viewed in this light, they become to him persons of distinction to whom he pays court. This is why he does not consider it sufficient that his gift should relieve their necessities; he desires also that his service should be acceptable to them; and, that he may obtain this favour, he asks for the prayers of the whole Church. So important a position do the poor occupy in the Church

of Jesus Christ that St. Paul seems to find his most solid happiness in the honour of serving them and in the delight of pleasing them.

Let us always remember this in our intercourse with the poor, and in the services which we may be able to render them. Let us try to be more deeply imbued with the feelings of the Apostles on this subject, and as far as possible imitate their example. Let us never forget that although the world's honours, wealth and rank may place us above them apparently, yet that the marks of Jesus Christ, which they are so happy as to bear deeply impressed upon them, raise them in reality far above us. Let us, in serving them, reverence the mysterious dispensation of Divine Providence, which gives them the highest rank in the Church, and such lofty prerogatives that the rich are only admitted into that Church to serve them.

Indeed this second truth, namely, that the rich are only admitted into the Church to serve the poor, is so evident and natural a sequence of what we have already considered that there is no need to go very deeply into an explanation or statement of its proofs. It is very certain that our Divine Lord, Who in His Gospel only promises us afflictions and crosses, has no need for the rich in His Church; and their pomp and magnificence having nothing in common with the profound humiliation of their God veiling His Divinity upon the Cross, we can easily understand that He does not seek them for their own sake. For, indeed, of what use are they to Him in His Kingdom? To build magnificent temples in His honour, or to adorn His altars with gold and precious stones? Do not try to persuade yourselves that the Eternal God takes

pleasure in those adornments. He accepts them indeed from the hands of men as tokens of their piety, as the homage due to Him from their religion. But, far from its demanding or exacting this expenditure of wealth, do you not see that there is nothing simpler or less costly than what is necessary for His worship? He requires only pure water in order to regenerate His children; a little bread and wine are all that is needed in order to consecrate the Eucharistic Mysteries in which dwells the Source of all His graces. Never did our God consider Himself better served than when the Holy Sacrifice was offered to Him in dungeons, and when humility and faith were the only adornments of His temples. Formerly, under the Old Law, He desired to be worshipped with all possible display of pomp and splendour; but the simplicity which He (if I may so speak) affects in the worship of the New Covenant is intended to show the rich of this world that He has no longer any need of them or of their treasured gold, except for the service of His poor.

But these poor He owns that He does need, and He entreats their help: *Behold I tell you a mystery* (1 Cor. xv. 51). This is indeed a great mystery, great and most admirable. Jesus has need of nothing; and Jesus has need of all. He has need of nothing as regards His power, but He has need of all as regards His compassion. Yes; this is the mystery of the New Testament. The same mercy which induced our innocent Jesus to take upon Him the tremendous load of the sins of the whole world still compels Him, in all the joy and glory of Heaven, to take upon Him the heavy burden of that world's miseries. For as the most guiltless, nay, the All-Holy, bore the

weightiest load of sin, so the possessor of boundless wealth of riches which neither moth nor rust can consume is the most needy, wanting all things. Here He famishes with hunger, there He is parched with a consuming thirst; here He groans under the galling pressure of the heaviest chains, there He is racked and wasted with grievous sickness; He suffers at one and the same time from the extremes of cold and heat. Poor indeed, and the poorest of the poor, because all the other poor suffer only for themselves, it is Jesus Christ alone Who suffers for the whole vast company of the afflicted and distressed. It is then the pressing need of His poor which induces Him to admit the rich to share their advantages in the Fold of the Church.*

What indeed would be the fate of the poor and the afflicted, were there none but such as these in the household of God? Who would relieve their sad necessities? And remember that Jesus, our Divine Redeemer, suffers in His poor, that He feels in Himself every hardship, every pang of want and privation, which they have to endure. It is true that He might send His holy Angels to minister to them; but it is more just and reasonable that they should be aided by men and women like themselves.

Enter, then, you who are rich in this world's goods, enter the Church of Jesus Christ; the door at last is open to you, but open only for the sake of the poor, and on condition of your serving them. It is for love

* "A certain inequality in the conditions of men for the maintenance of order and subordination is the work of God, and sets forth the divine law. Any great disproportion which we remark among men is their own work, brought about by the law of violence. All extremes are corrupt, and originate with man: the law of compensation is just, and comes from God."—La Bruyère.

of His children that He permits the entrance of those strangers. Behold the miracle of poverty! Yes, the rich were foreigners; but the service of the poor naturalizes them, and avails in the expiation which they must make for all the evil done while the taint of their wealth clung to them. Therefore take heed, rich men who pride yourselves so much upon this world's honour and rank. Never forget that however splendid your titles and distinctions may be in that poor world which you once valued so highly, in the Church of Jesus Christ you are only the servants of the poor. Do not take offence at this title. The Patriarch Abraham gloried in it; numerous though his own household servants were, he would depute to none the duty of waiting upon the destitute and needy. As soon as any such approached his house, he hastened to welcome them, setting before them the choicest and most delicate food, waiting upon them at table himself. St. Peter Chrysologus, speaking of this, says: "Abraham, at the sight of any poor man crossing his threshold, forgets that he is a master, and plays the part of a servant." And why, think you, was he so eager to serve the poor? Because he, the father of all true believers, already saw in spirit the rank which they were one day to hold in the Church. Already he sees Jesus Christ in them, he forgets his own dignity in the contemplation of theirs, and by his example shows the rich how sacred is their obligation to serve the poor.*

But how? what kind of service ought we to render

* "The personification of Christ in suffering humanity invests all forms of misery with a divine halo; the hearts of Christians, believing in this personification, are drawn to the poor with power which they dare not resist, under penalty of refusing tender love

them? in what are we bound to assist them? The example of the Patriarch has already answered that question; but St. Augustine goes still more deeply into the matter, and gives us more definite instruction on the subject. He says: "The service which you owe to the needy consists in taking upon your own shoulders a part of the heavy burden which weighs upon them so grievously." St. Paul commands the faithful to do this: *Bear ye one another's burdens* (Gal. vi. 2). No precept can be plainer than this. The poor have their own peculiar burden, and the rich too have theirs. The poor have their burden; who does not know that? When we see them toiling and labouring day after day in the sweat of their brow, we can feel little doubt as to the heaviness of the load which continually weighs them down. But although the rich appear to tread the earth with a light step, free from care and anxiety, it is not really so. They too have their burden and no light one, the burden of their wealth, as the poor have to carry the burden of their necessities. "The burden of the poor," says St. Augustine, "is their not having what they absolutely need; the burden of the rich is their having what they do not absolutely need." What! you say, is it a burden to have too many possessions and goods? And not only do you ask the question openly and directly, but I know that many a man of the world in his secret heart longs passionately to lay such a burden upon his own shoulders. Ah well, let all who cherish such longings wait for the coming

to the Babe of Bethlehem and the Saviour of Calvary."—Archbishop J. Ireland, *The Church and Modern Society*, vol. i., p. 332.

"But it will be asked, Have you no faith in philanthropy? No; for, as Chateaubriand says, philanthropy is only the false coin of charity."—Balmes, *European Civilization*, chap. xxxiii.

of that Day which, slow though its dawn may seem to be, is yet so certain to break upon all of us, when they will be summoned before the great Tribunal, and the just but inexorable Judge of the whole earth will demand a strict account of all the talents committed to them. Yes, of all—of talents wasted, buried, hoarded, or spent on things that perish in the using. Then, in that Day, they will understand and acknowledge the truth, that their wealth is indeed a heavy incubus; then, too late, they will repent of not having shaken off so grievous a load.

But do not let us wait until the coming of that dreadful day; let us, while we have time, obey St. Paul's command: *Bear ye one another's burdens.* You who are rich, bear the burden of the poor, relieve their wants, help them to support the heavy weight of suffering under which they groan: but do not forget that while doing this you are really labouring for your own advantage; that when you give to them, you lighten their burden but at the same time they lighten yours; you bear the weight of need and indigence which presses them to the very dust, they take upon their shoulders the load of wealth and superfluities with which you are overweighted. Share one another's burdens then, so that (as St. Paul says) *there may be an equality* (2 Cor. viii. 14). For think how unjust it would be if the poor had alone to bear the burden of this world's miseries. If they do sometimes complain and murmur against the decrees of Divine Providence, dear Lord, bear with me if I say that it is with some show of justice;* for, since we

* "The murmurs of the poor are just," wrote Bossuet in one of his sermons on Almsgiving. See also his sermon on Final Impenitence.

"Rich men," cried Massillon, in his sermon on Almsgiving,

are all moulded of the same clay, and since there can be but little difference between one lump of such clay and another, why should we see on the one hand enjoyment, distinction, affluence, and on the other, dejection, want, hopeless poverty, even contempt and servitude? Why should one highly favoured individual live in such luxury and be able to gratify even his idlest whim and fancy, while another poor wretch, as much a man as he, can scarcely manage to support his wife and children, or to satisfy the claims of his own gnawing hunger? Seeing as we do such strange inequality, how could we justify a Providence which seems to deal so ill in its distribution of the treasures which God would have equally divided among His children, if that same Providence had not found a means of relieving the wants of the poor, a means of establishing that equality which should exist among men? In order to provide this means,

" do you not, perhaps, turn the public misery to your advantage? Do you not, perhaps, make of indigence a barbarous occasion of gain? Do you not know the inhuman art of profiting by the tears and necessities of your brethren? "

In his *Caractères* La Bruyère (who was a protégé of Bossuet's) has left us an awful picture of the miserable condition of the then peasants of France: " Certain wild animals, male and female, are scattered over the country; they are dark, livid, sunburnt, chained as it were to the soil that they dig and grub with unwearied pertinacity; they have a sort of articulate voice, and when they stand erect, they show a human face, and in fact are men." And Fénelon wrote anonymously to Louis XIV.: " Your subjects are dying of hunger. France has become a huge hospital. The magistrates are discredited and harassed. You have brought all this trouble on yourself. The people no longer delight in your victories and conquests; they are filled with bitterness and despair. You make everything centre round your own person, as if you were the God of the whole earth."

For a dicussion on the relation between religious truth and material prosperity, and a description of the wretchedness of enormous masses of the people of modern England, see Bishop John Vaughan's *Faith and Folly*, pp. 432-466; also Robert Blatchford's *Merrie England*.

God has established His holy Church, into which He does indeed receive the rich, but only on condition of their serving the poor; His Church in which He ordains that abundance shall supply deficiency, and gives portions to the needy out of the superfluities of the wealthy.* Let this thought be with you always and rule your conduct as regards the poor and the distressed. If you do not carry their burdens your own will overwhelm you; the clogging weight of your own riches so badly administered will drag you down even into the lowest depths of Hell; while, on the other hand, if you share with the poor the burden of their poverty, by relieving their necessities, you will deserve to participate also with them in their privileges.†

And let me remind you that without such participation in the privileges of the poor there is no salvation for the rich. For if it is true, as I have said, that the Church is the city of the poor, if they hold the highest rank in it, if it was principally for

* Cf. Bourdaloue's two sermons on *Almsgiving;* also Lacordaire's Conference on *Catholic Doctrine regarding Property*, Eng. trans. (London, 1853).

† For an exposition of the natural law of justice, which it is the duty of the State rigidly to enforce, and of the supernatural law of almsgiving, the urging of which on the Christian conscience has been entrusted to the Church, see M. Georges Goyau, *Ketteler* (Paris, 1907), pp. 120-123.

"Nowadays the world says that alms are not enough; and the world is right. The world rebels against the old word charity, *caritas;* and here the world is wrong: it does not understand the meaning of the term. Rich and poor alike ignore it. The disinherited masses call for justice. This is not calculated to frighten the Church. It is not a term which she fails to understand. She thirsts and hungers for justice. *Blessed are those that thirst for justice.* For centuries she has preached it to the great and to the lowly, without dissociating it from charity; for, in her wisdom, which is deeper than that of our modern politicians, she holds

them that this blessed city was founded, we may justly conclude that its privileges belong in an especial manner to them. In all kingdoms, in all empires, there are privileged individuals, persons of eminence, who have special rights and immunities, and the reason for these privileges is that either owing to their birth or to the nature of their public functions they are in closer touch with their Sovereign than are the other members of the community. The greatness, the splendour, the majesty of that Sovereign which encircles his own brows like a halo, sheds some of its lustre upon all those who approach him. Well, since Holy Scripture tells us that the Church is a kingdom, perfect in its ordering and government, we cannot doubt but that it has also its privileged members. And from whence do these privileges originate except from the companionship, the intimate intercourse with their Divine Prince, with Jesus Christ Himself? If, then, in order to gain these privileges we must be united with our Adorable Saviour, do not let us seek them among the rich. Our Monarch's Crown is a Crown of Thorns; the light which radiates from it is truly a mystic glory, for it is made up of suffering and pain. It is

that justice and charity are inseparable, both representing the two aspects of the same virtue."—A. LEROY-BEAULIEU, *Papacy, Socialism, and Democracy*, chap. iii.

See also Bossuet's sermon on *Justice*, preached before Louis XIV. "Justice," writes Bossuet, "is the sacred bond of human society, the necessary curb upon licence, the unique foundation of tranquillity. When justice reigns, there is good faith in treaties, probity in commerce, properness in all social affairs. Justice is the principal virtue and the common ornament of public and private persons. Justice, the queen of the moral virtues, is served and surrounded on her throne by three excellent virtues which may be called her principal ministers; they are firmness, prudence, and mercy."

in the poor, it is in those who suffer that the majesty of this spiritual kingdom dwells. Jesus being Himself poor and needy, it was fitting that He should associate Himself with His fellow-sufferers, and bestow His favours upon them.

Let us, then, henceforth no longer despise poverty or treat her as a mean and contemptible creature. It is true that she sprang from the very dregs of the people; but the King of Glory having espoused her, she became at once noble and highly to be honoured; and from the very moment of that marvellous alliance the Royal Bridegroom has bestowed upon the poor all the privileges of His Empire. To the needy and destitute He promises a Kingdom; to those who weep, consolation; food to the hungry; eternal joy to those who suffer. If, then, all the rights, all the graces, all the privileges of the Gospel, are for the poor of Jesus Christ, what remains for you, the rich in this world's goods? When He speaks of you in His Gospel it is only to anathematize your pride: *Woe to you rich!* (Luke vi. 24). Who would not tremble at such a sentence? who would not quail before so terrible a malediction? There is indeed but one hope left for you; but there *is* that hope. It is true that those privileges are given to the poor; but you can receive them from their hands, and it is to them that the Holy Ghost sends you that you may obtain the graces bestowed by Heaven. Do you desire the forgiveness of your many and grievous sins? *Redeem them*, says the Holy Ghost, *by alms* (Dan. iv. 24). Do you implore the mercy of God? Seek it, then, from the hands of the poor, by showing mercy towards them: *Blessed are the merciful* (Matt. v. 7). Do you long to gain an entrance into the

Kingdom of Heaven? Jesus Christ Himself tells you that its portals will be unbarred to you, provided that the poor plead for your admission there. *Out of the mammon of iniquity*, He says, *make unto yourselves friends, who, at your death, shall receive you into everlasting dwellings** (Luke xvi. 9). Thus we see that grace, mercy, remission of sins, the very Kingdom itself, is in their hands, and that the rich cannot enter there unless the poor receive them.

How rich, then, are you whom we call poor! How poor are you whom men call rich! If indeed you who abound in worldly goods cling to those goods, you will never have a share in the treasures which the love of your King and your God would give you in their stead;† for you nothing will remain but the terrible malediction of the Gospel: *Woe to you rich, for you have received your consolation.* Ah, if you would find a shelter from this threatened thunderbolt of Divine wrath, seek it under the wing of poverty: make for yourselves friends of the poor; give and you shall receive; cast away your temporal blessings, and fill your empty treasure-chambers with spiritual ones; share the sorrows of the destitute and the afflicted, and God will give you also a share in their privileges.

What more can I say concerning the advantages of poverty, and the importance, nay, the absolute neces-

* That is to say: "By means of your wealth make friends of the poor; so that when your wealth fails you, as it will at death, they may plead for you."

† "Has this man given much at his death? Nay, he has given nothing, but he has left somewhat; and he has left nothing but what he could not retain: he has kept it till the last moment; and if he could carry it away neither God nor the poor would have had any part in it."—BOURDALOUE.

sity, of relieving it? Nothing, except to remind you, in the words of the Psalmist, that *blessed is he that understandeth concerning the needy and the poor* (Ps. xl. 1). Notice this word *understandeth*. It is not enough to open your bodily eyes to the poor and to their necessities. If you look upon them in this way only, you will see nothing but what is mean and contemptible, and you will despise them. You must open the eyes of your soul, of your intelligence guided by faith, and you will see in them Jesus Christ. You will see in them the representatives of His poverty, the citizens of His Kingdom, the inheritors of His promises, the distributors of His graces, the true children of His Church, the first members of His Mystical Body. Those who do so open the eyes of their intelligence and therefore see all this in the poor, are—and can we wonder that they are?—eager to assist them and to relieve their necessities.* But, merely to give them alms either because we feel that we are constrained to do so by their importunity, or because our natural kindheartedness moves us to do it, does indeed relieve their distress, but it is not understanding the poor as we are bidden to do. He who truly enters into the deep mystery of fraternal charity is he who regards the poor as the first children of the Church; who, honouring them as such, believes himself bound to serve them; and who has no hope of sharing in the blessings of the Gospel except by the means of such charity as our Divine Lord Himself prescribes in that Gospel.

* "It is true that there is a thing crudely called charity, which means charity to the deserving poor; but charity to the deserving is not charity at all, but justice. It is the undeserving who require it, and the ideal either does not exist at all or exists wholly for them."—G. K. CHESTERTON.

XII

AMBITION *

By Bossuet

To wage war, even in word, against ambition is something very like an act of rebellion against those who sit in high places and of whose life such ambition is the very soul. It may even seem that to decry the gifts of fortune, of which princes are the dispensers, is to belittle the majesty of those princes. Yet we may remember that all godly sovereigns fervently desire to efface themselves and their own personal glory in the presence of the glory of God, and, far from resenting or regarding as an act of disloyalty the piety which puts their own temporal power on this lower plane, they know well that they are never more profoundly reverenced than when their power ranks second only to that of the Eternal God. Bearing this in mind, we may boldly and unhesitatingly assert that not even the most august and powerful Court the world has ever known can do anything for a Christian which is really worthy of his esteem; and we may try at the same time to open the eyes of men to the true nature of what they call fortune, to which they cling with such passionate tenacity.

* Sermon preached before Louis XIV. and his Court.

To effect this is it not enough to bid you for one moment recall the circumstances of the earthly life of the Son of God? When, as we are told, the world had gone after Him; when the acclamations of the populace promised Him nothing less than a throne, He so despised this vain and empty triumph as to make Himself, of His own will, mean and contemptible in their eyes, a Man of Sorrows, poorly clothed, without a roof to shelter His Divine head. And as if this were not enough, in order to teach us by His own example the vanity and inconstancy of human applause and fortune's favours, in the short interval of three days it was His will that public hatred should actually nail to the Cross Him Whom public acclamation had declared to be worthy of a throne. Does not this bring home to us the lesson that fortune is absolutely nothing; that no matter whether she robs us of our treasures or showers her favours upon us, whether she is fickle or constant, whether she smiles or frowns upon us, always and at all times and in all places she is contemptible, wholly unworthy of our consideration or regard? *

Let me in the first place show you how fortune tricks us even when she is most liberal in bestowing her favours, or at least appears to be so. I might indeed unmask her deceitfulness by proving to you, as I easily could do, that she never holds to what she has promised; but I shall do this more thoroughly and more forcibly by showing you that she does not even really give what she pretends to give. Her

* "Fortune, that empress of the world, is so much in league and amity with folly, that to wise men she is always stingy, and sparing of her gifts, but is profusely liberal and lavish to fools."—ERASMUS.

most precious and costly gift, the one too which she is the most chary of bestowing, is that which she calls power. This is what the ambitious crave most intensely, value most highly, and guard most jealously, however small may be the portion which she doles out to them. Let us, then, see if she does really and truly give it to us, or if it is anything more than a phantom splendour with which she dazzles our poor earthly vision, all bleared and feeble as it is. To do this, we must first ascertain what power we can have, and what power it is that we need to have during our life in this world. But, as the minds of men are very apt to go astray when searching into this matter, let us try to bring them back into the right way by the teaching of St. Augustine.

That great Doctor lays down as a principle a most important truth, namely, that happiness consists in being able to do what we will, and in willing to do what we ought to do. This second ingredient of happiness is also necessary; for as, if you cannot do what you will, your will is not satisfied, so too if you do not will to do what you ought to do, your will is ill-regulated and disordered. In either case there cannot be happiness, because if the will which is unsatisfied is poor, too the will which is undisciplined and ill-regulated is sick; and this sickness excludes happiness. It is therefore quite as necessary to will what we ought to will as to be able to accomplish what we wish to accomplish.

Let us add, if you will, that it is unquestionably more important to will what one ought to will. When you cannot do what you will, it is because you have been prevented from so doing by some outside cause; but when you do not will what you ought to will, the

fault always springs from your own innate depravity. Thus you see that in the first case it is simply a misfortune, while in the second it is always a fault; and the very fact of its being a fault obviously makes it to be the greater misfortune of the two. Thus it is undeniably true that for the attainment of true happiness it is more necessary to have a well-regulated will than a far-reaching power.*

And that is why I can never sufficiently marvel at the ill-regulated state of our affections and the unsoundness of our judgment. We abandon rule, says St. Augustine, and sigh for power. Blind and foolish mortals, what are we thinking of? what are we attempting to do? Happiness comes of two constituents, and we in our folly believe that we can possess it whole and entire, while all the time we are violently wrenching away one of its two essentials. More than this, we actually cast away the more essential part; and the one which we choose, being separated from its companion, far from making us happy, only increases the weight of our misery. For, of what use is power to an ill-regulated, disordered will, except to make it more miserable by enabling it to do the evil which the mere desire to do had caused so much wretchedness? Have we not said, do we not know, that the prosperity of sinners is in truth a scourge sent to them by God, since by the permitting of the fulfilment of sinful desires poison is infused into a wound already mortal, and a fresh impetus is given to the slowly consuming disease which has already begun to gnaw our vitals? The Son of God Himself

* Cf. Montesquieu, *The Spirit of Laws*, bk. vi., chap. iii.: "In Governments, liberty can consist only in the power to do what we ought to will, and in not being constrained to do what we ought not to will."

acknowledged that Pilate had received from on high power over His Divine person. Had the will of that Roman Governor been properly regulated, he would joyfully have made use of his power, if not to punish injustice and calumny, at least to protect and deliver innocence. But because his will had been corrupted by a cowardice doubly shameful in a man of his high rank and authority, this power was only turned by him into a weapon to accomplish the awful crime of Deicide, against which his own conscience was rising up in rebellion. This is the last, the most terrible form of moral blindness, which leads us, before our will is rightly regulated, to desire a power which will after all turn against us in the end, and which will be fatal to our happiness because it will be fatal to our virtue.

Our God, in His infinite wisdom, gives us a very different guiding principle; He would lead us by straight and level paths, not by those which wind along the brink of precipices and chasms. This is why He teaches His servants not to desire to be able to do much, but to practise themselves in desiring all that is most excellent; to regulate their desires before thinking of satisfying them; to begin the enjoyment of true happiness here below by means of a perfectly disciplined will, before they attain to its full consummation in the life to come by means of that absolute power which shall then be theirs.*

Let us, however, make a more special and indi-

* "All virtue and goodness tend to make men powerful in this world; but they who aim at the power have not the virtue. Virtue is its own reward, and brings with it the truest and highest pleasures; but they who cultivate it for the pleasure-sake are selfish, not religious, and will never gain the pleasure, because they never can have the virtue."—CARD. NEWMAN.

vidual application of St. Augustine's teaching. What is it, children of earth, that you ask? That God should give you much power? If so, I must answer you in the words of our Divine Lord: *You know not what you ask* (Matt. xx. 22). Consider seriously what and where you are; consider the weight of mortality which encumbers and oppresses you, the frail and fleeting fashion of this world which *passes away* (1 Cor. vii. 31). In the midst of so much weakness and instability, where do you look to find anythink like a support or even a foundation for this grand idea of power? Assuredly such a high-sounding name ought to have some force behind it, something to make it more than a mere empty name, something to give it substance and security. Yet what is there on earth that can accomplish this? Open the eyes of your mind, of your soul; penetrate below the mere surface of things. The greatest power in the world cannot go beyond the taking away of man's life. I say, *the taking it away;* but, after all, as that life is always consuming itself, wasting away, nearing its end from the moment of its beginning, is it such a great matter, such an immense exercise of power, to extinguish by violence the already more or less flickering and waning spark of mortal existence? Ah! never for a moment believe that where mortality holds its sway power can be found. That cannot be, and therefore (says St. Augustine) an infinitely wise Providence has decreed that while men sojourn in this world of time and sense they should practise justice, and that in the undying life of the world to come power should be given to them. What more could we ask? If here below we desire what we ought to desire in this present state of existence, we shall be

able to do all that we desire in a future state. Let us regulate and order our will by the love of justice. God will then assuredly crown our efforts in His own good time by the communication of His power. If we give the poor fleeting moments of time to the right ordering of our thoughts and words and deeds, He will give us all eternity to satisfy our desires.

I think that you must see now what sort of power we ought to desire while this present life lasts: power to regulate our conduct, to moderate and control our passions, to model our whole being according to the Divine pattern set before us. Power over ourselves, power against ourselves; or rather, says St Augustine, power for ourselves against ourselves. O power so little coveted! and yet the only power which is true and real! For our power is resisted and opposed in two different ways: either by impediments being put in the way of our carrying out our designs, or by our being disturbed and hindered in our right to make up our minds and form legitimate resolutions. In this latter sort of opposition even the authority of a Divine command is defied; and this is real bondage. The Sacred Scriptures give us an example of both these attacks brought to bear upon human power in the same household.

Joseph was a slave in the house of Potiphar, and the wife of that Governor of Egypt was the mistress of that house. Joseph, being weighted and constrained by the yoke of servitude, was not the master of his own actions; and the woman, the slave of her passion, was not even the mistress of her own will. See to what lengths a degrading, lawless love carried her! It may indeed be that in her secret heart a sense of

her own vileness stirred some emotion of shame, but her unbridled passions made her their slave, ruled her, dominated her, urged her on to evil, compelled her to follow their criminal counsels. Do we not see in this woman an instance of power more absolutely fettered than in the captive Joseph, who was a servant in that proud and imperious household?

Innumerable tyrants of this sort hold us captive, and yet we make no complaint. If we are thrown into prison; if our hands and feet are fettered, we fill the air with our lamentations; but we endure without a groan the pressure of those cruel chains which are wound so tightly round about our hearts. We are only too ready to cry out when the ministers of our will and pleasure, the members which we employ to carry out our plans and our desires, are put in irons; but when the will itself, when reason and intelligence which rule and command those ministers and members, are enslaved and fettered, we are dumb and do not utter a single murmur. Wake up, poor slave; wake up, and at last acknowledge this truth, that if it is a great power to be able to carry out our designs and desires, it is a greater, nay, it is the only really great one, to dominate and reign over our wills.

Whoever has tasted the sweetness of this empire will indeed care little for the credit and the power that fortune can give. And for this reason. There is no greater obstacle in the way of self-command than a position of authority over others. In fact there is within us a certain malignant humour which has generated in our hearts the germs of all vices. They lurk in secret corners, coiled up in a thousand serpent-like folds, and only from time to time rear-

ing a venomous head. The best and surest way of repressing them is to deprive men of power. St Augustine knew well that in order to heal and cure a diseased and sin-sick will it must be weakened, nay, paralysed. What? you ask; are vices any the less vices because they are hidden and secret ones? It is the unseen germ of corruption which propagates decay and death. How then can the diseased will be cured by leaving the poison deep down in the heart? I will tell you. We grow weary of always desiring the impossible, of forming schemes which are continually frustrated, of never getting beyond the malice, that is, the evil intention, of crime. Finding ourselves so powerless to carry out the sinful designs which we had planned, we begin to recover ourselves, to see things a little more clearly as they really are. Conscious of weakness, we think it may be more prudent to moderate our desires. At first indeed we are, in a measure, driven by necessity to do this, but in the end we apply ourselves in all good faith and with a serious intent to the work in hand, blessing the lack of power which we find to be the first successful remedy for healing our disease and bringing about our cure.

On the other hand, how certain it is that the more independent we become the more headstrong and indomitable do our passions grow. We are like children who need a severe master and must be ruled by fear and stern discipline. If these restraints are removed, our corrupt inclinations begin to stir within us and, starting up into full life and action, to force down our liberty under the yoke of their intolerant licence. Do we not see examples of this every day of our lives? And does not this teaching sufficiently con-

vince you of the deceitfulness of fortune, since, far from giving us power, she does not even leave us our liberty?

Well might our Divine Lord bid us fear the high places, the posts of distinction and authority of earth; He, in His infinite wisdom, knew well that power is the most frequent instrument in the undoing of men, that in exercising it over others they often lose it over themselves, and that it is like a heady wine which takes effect even upon the most sober and temperate. That man will be master of his will who knows how to moderate his ambition, who considers himself sufficiently powerful if he can but regulate his desires and so rate the things of this world at their proper value as never for a moment to measure his happiness by the elevation of his fortune.

Ambitious men, however, bring their own arguments on this subject to bear against those which I have been putting before you. They maintain that it is absolutely necessary for them to distinguish themselves; that it is a mark of weakness to be content with mediocrity; that great geniuses always separate themselves from the common herd and, so to speak, force the hand of destiny.* The example, they say, of those who are continually aiming at progress seems to reproach others for their lack of ambition; and doubtless it is this desire of men to distinguish themselves which gives the most tremendous impetus to earthly ambition. Well, I might by several modes of reasoning combat these arguments in favour of self-exaltation and separation from

* "Of all the follies of the world, the most received and the most universal is the desire for reputation and glory."—MONTAIGNE.

the ordinary mass of our fellow-men. I might remind you that this present life is a period of strange confusion, in which one thing jostles against another, and that there is no hard and fast line of demarcation now between man and man, but that there is an appointed time, a Day which will come at the end of the world, when the wicked shall be separated from the good, and that this great and eternal act of discrimination and separation is the only way to which Christian ambition with all its powers of soul and body should aspire. I might add that it is vain and idle for us to try and distinguish ourselves in this world, over which death has such power that we know sooner or later he will come and with a relentless hand drag us down from those high places which were our pride and boast, and thrust us into that place of darkness and nothingness where the mortal part of every man, be he prince or beggar, must be hidden away till the great Day of Judgment.* So certain, so unalterable, so evident to the senses is this common fate of all men, that even the most ignorant will smile at your empty boasting and at a display of magnificence and power so uncertain in its duration, so short-lived even at its best, and

* "Naught but the Divine endures; all else is smoke."—MANTEGNA.

"Can you not imagine, placarded on the walls in Paris, a composition of large design and brilliant colouring, in which is seen Death, elegant and thin, conducting the representatives of contemporary society to the tomb and to oblivion? Do you not easily recognise in this sinister procession Rothschild and his millions, Eiffel and his tower, a proletarian reading the journal which promises him to-morrow the end of his miseries, a deputy flourishing his cheque, an anarchist with his bomb under his jacket, and even an academician in a coat embroidered with green palms, armed with his harmless sword, and carying his complete works of several volumes under his arm?"—F. COPPÉE.

will say to you, in the words of the Prophet: "In your pride and self-exaltation you thought yourself set apart from the common herd, but *you are wounded as well as we, you are become like us*" (Isa. xiv. 10).

Without, however, spending time upon such reasoning as this; without pausing any longer to remind you of such obvious truths, I would simply ask these ambitious men by what road they intend to reach those heights of self-glorification and distinction at which they are aiming.

The path of vice is shameful and degrading, the path of virtue is very long and perhaps tedious. Virtue, generally speaking, is not sufficiently pliable to commend itself to men, it never relaxes its rules, it moves with a slow and measured pace, making sure indeed but scarcely perceptible progress. Vice on the other hand, is active, eager, prompt, leaving no stone unturned to further its designs. After a time you grow weary of the dull routine, the slow movements of virtue, you relax in your efforts to accommodate your restless footsteps to its slow pace; then in your impatience you bend it and twist it till it fits in with the world's ways, till it is only a travesty of virtue. Ah! how much wiser it would be to renounce ambition once and for ever. Possibly to do so might from time to time cause you some anxiety, but in the end you would always be the gainer, and perseverance in such a renunciation would be far easier if you began it before you had actually tasted the sweets of earth's honours and dignities. Live your life then contented with it as it is, with yourself (as regards position and eminence) as you are. Above all things, never let the desire to

do good make you crave for a condition more exalted and more prominent than your own. This is the most common lure of ambitious men. They are always full of pity for the public; they unduly set themselves up as reformers of abuses, stern censors of all who are in high places. And what splendid schemes they make for the Government; what wise counsels they prepare to give to the Ministers! What lofty sentiments they entertain for the Church; what pious regulations for the Diocese are hatched in these busy brains! But (ah, how great a *but*!) the love of the world takes possession of them, the spirit of the age almost insensibly dominates them; and then, when they have reached the goal, and when the power which they have so much coveted seems almost within their grasp, they have to wait for opportunities to carry out their plans, opportunities which are leaden-footed and lagging in their march, and which in fact never reach these schemers. Thus perish all their splendid designs, thus vanish like a dream all their lofty thoughts and imaginations.

That being so, do not let us desire so passionately greater power than we possess, but let us rather consider how we may give a good account of that which Almighty God has entrusted to us. A river, in order to be salutary and beneficial in the district which it traverses, has no need to overflow its banks or to innundate the neighbouring country; by flowing peacefully along over its pebbly bed, it does not fail to water the thirsty earth and do all that such a stream is expected to do for the public in its vicinity. So too it should be with us. Instead of trying to go beyond the limits of the power given to us, instead of seeking to overflow as it were in

ambitious schemes and intentions, let us rather strive by kindness and benevolence to make what little power we possess more and more useful to others; and if our sphere of action is narrow and restricted let our charity be boundless, immense. This should be the ambition of a Christian, who smiles at fortune's empty promises, and at the same time is absolutely prepared for her reverses, of which he has no dread.

As regards those reverses, I may begin by observing that fortune, deceitful in all else, is at least sincere in that she never conceals her treacheries from us. On the contrary, she flaunts them before our eyes, and from time to time even delights in astonishing the world by strokes as terrible as they are unexpected, as if to remind men of her strength, as well as of her inconstancy, her malignity, her baneful eccentricities. That is what often makes me think that the smiles of fortune are not really favours but deceits, that she only bestows them on us in order to get us more entirely into her clutches, and that the benefits which we receive from her hand are not so much gifts from her to us, as tokens or pledges which we ourselves give her, proclaiming ourselves thereby to be for evermore her captives, under the yoke of her harsh and malevolent power.*

This truth, established on the firm foundation of such a record of convincing experience, ought to undeceive all who are ambitious of this world's honours and privileges; but, strange to say, it has precisely

* "A slave has but one master; the ambitious man has as many masters as there are persons whose aid may contribute to the advancement of his fortune."—La Bruyère.

the contrary effect. For instead of their aiming at that solid, that enduring, that eternal good which the changes and chances of this mortal life cannot alter or touch; instead of their despising fickle fortune because they are convinced of this fickleness, their very conviction of her inconstancy makes them give themselves to her, body and soul, hoping that so they may find some sort of protection and defence against her wiles. If you doubt me, look for a moment at this clever, highly gifted politician whom fortune has raised to a position of great eminence. Looking down from his lofty elevation upon his fellow-men of smaller minds and meaner capacities, who boast of titles, outside show and gaudy glitter, he despises their littleness and treats their pretentious folly with contempt. In his own case, all he thinks and says is so different; his claims for distinction rest on such a solid basis; his wealth is immense and so secured that there is no possibility of any change in the splendid position of himself and his family. So at least he thinks in his blindness and ignorance; as though these very props which he imagines will be so firm and so resistant against the undermining powers of fortune were not after all dependent upon her, and as fragile as the edifice which he has been so carefully building up all these long years of his earthly lifetime.

But I have said enough in my own words on this subject. Listen to what God Himself says to you by the mouth of the Prophet Ezekiel concerning fortune: *The Assyrian*, he says, *was like a cedar in Libanus, watered by the dew of heaven, nourished by the fatness of the soil.* The Prophet means that the neighbouring powers loaded the Assyrian with

their gifts, and that he on his part drained the resources of his people for his own enrichment and aggrandizement. The inspired writer continues: *Therefore was his height exalted above all the trees of the country, and when he had spread forth his shadow, all the birds of the air made their nests in his branches.* That is to say, all his people, high and lowly, great and small, those immediately attached to his household and those who were scattered widely through his dominions, took refuge under his protection and followed his fortunes. *Neither cedar nor pine* (that is, not one of the princes of his court) *was like him in his beauty; no, nor any tree in the paradise of God.*

Surely here we can see the picture of one whom fortune has raised to the highest possible pinnacle of greatness, such greatness as is very seldom attained in this world. But now look at the reverse of the picture. Listen to the Prophet's words: *Because he was exalted in pride, and lifted his head even to the clouds, and because his heart was lifted up, therefore, saith the Lord, will I root him up and lay him level with the ground* (that is, I will bring shame and distress upon him, and he shall be weak and defenceless). *All those who rested under his shadow shall depart far from him, lest they should be buried beneath his ruins.* That is to say, his fall will be a terrible one; he will lie prone, inert, a useless log, a burden, no longer a support to others. Or even if he should in his lifetime meet with no reverses of fortune, death will surprise him in the midst of all his mighty schemes for self-advancement; he will go down into the grave, leaving all his affairs in such confusion that his heirs and descendants will find

themselves involved in ruin. Or it may be that God will take away from him his only son, so that the fruit of his life's labours and strenuous endeavours will pass into the hands of strangers; or that He will in His Divine Providence permit the man's vast wealth to be inherited by a prodigal spendthrift, who, finding himself suddenly in possession of riches which it has cost him no trouble to acquire, will only make a jest of the painful toil and labour of a fool who brought about his own eternal condemnation in order to leave his successor rich; and before a third generation comes upon this world's stage extravagance, debt, shameless prodigality, will have consumed all that the ambitious man left behind him. *All the branches of this great tree shall be broken off and scattered abroad through the length and breadth of the valleys;* that is, all his lands and estates, which he had gathered together with so much care and labour so as to form one united province, shall be disintegrated and shared by the many, to the amazement of all who, having watched the growth of this great fortune, now see it crumbled into ruins. Is this, they cry, the end of a greatness that was actually formidable in the eyes of the world? Is this the mighty tree whose topmost branches almost reached the clouds? Nothing is now left of it but a useless trunk. Is this the impetuous river which threatened to innundate all the neighbouring country? I see nothing of it now but a little foam, a few empty bubbles, nothing more. Ah! foolish and unwise, at what are you aiming? for whom do you scheme and toil so vainly?

"Nay," you answer perhaps; "I am neither foolish nor unwise. I know how to profit by the

example of others; I shall make a careful note of the weak spot in their life and behaviour, and if I find a tendency to the same in my own, I shall apply the proper remedy." Ah, but this is a mere useless precaution. Did the men whom you are watching profit by the example of those that went before them? You are deceiving yourself; the future holds in its secret keeping too many unlooked-for events, loss and ruin enter by too many cunning loopholes into a man's tower of strength for him to be able to guard against them at every point. "But," you insist, "I mean to enjoy the fruits of my labour." And for how long? perhaps for ten remaining years of life? "But I am thinking of my posterity, and of the name which I shall leave behind me." But perhaps your posterity may never come into the enjoyment of all that you intend to leave them? "Perhaps not. But perhaps, also, they may do so." And you are really content to spend your life in so many anxieties, so much toil, and, alas! in the commission of so many sins, without being able to wrest from fortune, to whom you sacrifice everything, more than a miserable *perhaps*! See! there is nothing secured to you, not even a tomb on which might be graven those proud titles which are the solitary remains of your fallen greatness. The avarice or the negligence of your heirs may possibly refuse even that to your memory, so little will they think of you only a few years after your death. The only thing which is secured to you and of which you may be absolutely certain, is the execution of the penalty due to your sins, the eternal vengeance which awaits the disorders of your life and the strivings of your boundless ambition. Ah, splendid relics of

your once-admired greatness! Wonderful results of a fortune which seemed to be crowning you with success! Oh, the folly, the illusions, the strange blindness of the children of men!

I entreat you all who are Christians, whatever else you may be, you who think it possible to find something solid and enduring here on earth; I entreat you to make use of this thought to seek that which alone stands firm as a rock and never fails us. It is true that man should try to settle and strengthen *himself*, not by confining his efforts within the narrow limits of this present life, but by thinking steadily and boldly of the next, of the eternity which he knows stretches out before him. He must in fact try as far as possible so to labour now that the fruits of that labour may endure for ever. He cannot indeed always live himself on this earth, but he desires that the work of brain and hands, of soul and body, of intellect and physical powers, should do so; he tries as far as possible to let future ages know his work, which is his fortune. There is in the soul of man an intense, passionate craving for immortality. This, rightly directed, is our salvation. But here is the error: men attach themselves, they cling pertinaciously, to whatever they love most; if they love most the perishable things of earth, they at once invest them with the halo of immortality; they look about for props and supports for this palace of splendour which fortune has built for them, but, alas! the props are just as frail and unsteady as the tottering edifice. Oh, men and women, disabuse yourselves of this error; if you love the unchanging, the enduring, the eternal, seek it in itself, and do not imagine that you can ever impart to the shifting sands and the swiftly

flowing river of this poor earthly life anything of the marvellous immutable perpetuity of eternity. O Eternity, thou art only in God, or rather, thou art God Himself. It is in Thee only that I would seek my support, my security, my fortune, my unchanging rest both in this world and in the next.

XIII

THE LAW OF GOD*

(Exordium of Sermon)

By Bossuet

"I have thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto Thy testimonies" (Ps. cxviii. 59).

Meditating upon this most serious and important subject, I picture myself as one who, having just arrived from a far-away country desolate and unknown to the rest of the world, ignorant himself of the ways and doings of the men and women who people the world, suddenly finds himself carried up to the summit of a very high mountain, from which, by the assistance of a power supernatural and divine, he is able to take in at a glance all the vast extent of land and sea spread before him, and to note all that is being done, all that is being planned and executed by their busy inhabitants. (Let me, in passing, observe that the blessed martyr Cyprian makes use of this same imagery when writing to his faithful friend Donatus and desiring him to consider and to avoid the follies and ignorance of the age in which they were living.) Well, from this elevation on which I imagine I find myself, I discover in the first place an infinite multitude of nations and peoples

* This is one of Bossuet's early sermons.

strangely various in temperament, manners, and customs; some of them mere barbarians, uncouth and savage, others men of culture, polished and civilised; so different from one another in every particular, so widely separated by barriers which appear to be immovable, that I can find no words in which to convey a just impression of this marvellous variety of characters, dispositions, inclinations, habits, purposes. And if, going a little further, I begin to consider the lives, the occupations, the interests of these men and women, are they less amazing in their variety and their complexity? O Eternal God! to Whom this vast humanity belongs, Who art the Creator of all these busy, restless, self-absorbed multitudes, what strange confusion, what anomalies, what disorders, what contradictions and disturbances seem to agitate them! In the great cities, I see men feverishly engrossed in a thousand different professions, trades, occupations. Here a lawyer or an advocate heated in argument or absorbed in schemes and technicalities of his profession; there a politician with no other thought than that of public questions; tradesmen dealing more largely in lies and trickery than in honest merchandise. Truly, as I consider these things and as my eye wanders from one object to another, the varied proofs of man's ingenuity and power of invention, coupled with so much chicanery and craftiness, fill me with such amazement and perplexity that I can scarcely believe the evidence of my senses.

Nor is it different if I turn aside from the crowded haunts of men and study the lives of those who make field and forest, hill and valley, their home. The inhabitants of these quiet places are indeed fewer in

number, but they are no less busy and striving than the townsfolk. No one is at leisure; one is building, another cultivating the land, ploughing his field, or digging and planting his garden, eager about the improvement and embellishment of his private property, or toiling to put bread into his own mouth or into the mouths of a hungry household. I need not enumerate all the varied occupations of rustic life; you know very well what they are. Even the sea, which nature seemed to have intended to be the empire of the winds and the dwelling-place of the finny tribe; even the sea, I say, men have claimed as their own. So marvellously have they to a certain extent gained the mastery over this fierce and treacherous element, that they have forced it to carry their conquering armies and colonizing energies to the most distant quarters of the globe, fearless and untiring in their audacity; so that we may say there is in the world no theatre in which they play their parts more boldly and inventively than on this storm-tossed, fickle, ever-varying, wonderful ocean.

Let us for a moment now consider the marvellous diversity in the inclinations, passions, characters and dispositions of men. Some, whose natures are impetuous, daring, generous, love danger, adventure, excitement, the tumult, the stir, the risks and even the terrors of battle; if it so happens that they are by force of circumstance compelled to lead a quiet domestic life, they try to content themselves with sport, hunting, shooting, and so forth, which are really a sort of mimic warfare. Others, who are of a quieter and more peaceful turn of mind, prefer the sweets of life, friendly intercourse with their neighbours, the study of letters, the collecting of curios.

You will find some who actually devote their time and energies to the accumulation of a store of *bons mots*, witty sayings, in order to gain eclat in society. You see one man absolutely absorbed in the pleasures of the gaming table, turning what should be only a relaxation of mind into an affair of the most vital importance, and wasting his money and the greater part of his time. Others pass their whole life in intrigue, never happy unless they are sharing other people's secrets, always eager to make new acquaintances and friends. You find one man wholly possessed with some mad passion which he calls love, another torn with the most bitter hatred and implacable revenge, another with furious and unreasoning jealousy. One man hoards, another squanders. Some are ambitious and always struggling for high places, they wish to live before the world, to be known and observed; others, of a more retiring nature, prefer the calm and gentle inactivity of private life. Every one has his own hobby, his own peculiar bent of mind, his own desires and inclinations. Characters are even more dissimilar than faces; every one wishes to air his folly according to his own fancy. The waves of the sea when it is agitated by the winds are not more numerous than the varied thoughts that are born in that unfathomable abyss, that storehouse of impenetrable secrecy, the heart of man. This is, as well as I can express it, what I seem to see when I consider attentively the affairs and the circumstances that influence the life of man.

Half-stunned and overwhelmed with amazement at those surprising incongruities and contradictions, I turn my thoughts upon myself; I ask myself, What

shall I do? whither shall I turn? *I have thought upon my ways.* Surely, I say to myself, other living creatures conduct themselves, or are conducted, in a more orderly and uniform manner; how is it that in all human concerns such inequality, such singularity, prevails? Can this be man, the half-divine being of whom such marvels are told? can it be that this soul, endowed as it is with undying vigour and beauty, is yet incapable of rising to a supernatural life, and of remembering what she is and whence she came? All those occupations which I see going on round about me seem to me either servile or frivolous, idle or criminal.* I discern in them stir and activity sufficient to agitate the soul, but neither rule nor safe guidance to calm and settle her. *All is vanity and affliction of spirit,* said the wisest of men. Can I, then, find nothing in all this world of time and space which could be counted worthy of a creature made to the image of God? *I have thought on my ways.* I search, I ponder, I study carefully and seriously my ways; when suddenly, in the midst of my doubt and perplexity, I make a wonderful discovery! In my groping, in my distracted seeking after what seemed the impossible, the unattainable, I stumble as it were upon an entirely new order of beings scattered by God's hand here and there, in scanty numbers (it is true), but all over the world; beings whose whole aim in life seems to be to obey the Law of God and to make its rules the pattern and guide of their daily and hourly conduct. These are the just, the faithful, the blessed. Their whole deportment, their behaviour, their very air and gestures,

* "Life is a comedy to those who think, and a tragedy to those who feel."—HORACE WALPOLE.

seem to me different from anything I have yet seen; they are self-restrained, calm, full of dignity and beauty. But then there are so few of these men; their number is so inconsiderable that they make a very poor show in the world. Moreover, generally speaking, I find that they are held in very low esteem; poverty and contempt seem to be their portion, while those who ill-treat and oppress them carry their heads high and are thought much of by men of all ranks and conditions. This consideration throws me into a new state of perplexity! Shall I follow the many or the few? the wise or the fortunate? those who enjoy the favour of the world at large, or those who are satisfied with the testimony of their own conscience? *I have thought on my ways.*

At last, after battling with many a doubt, many a difficulty, this is the conclusion at which I arrive, this is the anchorage found by my weary soul. I was born in the state of most profound ignorance; I was cast adrift in the world, not knowing what I ought to do there. What I have been able to learn from my surroundings, strange and miserable as they are, is so mingled with error of every sort and kind, that my soul would remain in a state of continual uncertainty if it had but its own lights to guide it. And yet, notwithstanding this uncertainty, I have been constrained to set forth upon a long and perilous journey; it is the journey of this mortal life in which I must of necessity struggle on, treading many and many a devious path, encompassed on all sides by perilous precipices. Blind and feeble as I am, what, oh! what shall I do if some happy fortune does not send me a faithful guide who shall lead my

wandering feet into a safe path and rightly direct my fearful, doubting soul? To find such a guide is the first thing I need, desire, and must do.

But it is not only that my mind is darkened by ignorance; my will also is strangely weakened and disordered. Again and again it is stirred by idle or unruly or evil desires. I am almost continually tossed and shaken by the vehemence of my passions and the violence of my emotions. I must, then, endeavour to find some certain rule of conduct which shall calm and settle my disordered impulses and reduce my actions to a state of reasonable propriety; that is my second need. And now I come to my third need. My understanding and my will (which are the two principal faculties governing my actions) being thus wounded, the one by ignorance, the other by lawlessness, my whole soul is agitated and troubled by such a condition of things, and is consequently plunged into fresh miseries, those of perpetual doubt and anxiety. I wander from one desire to another, unable to find anything that can satisfy me. I shall therefore live henceforth without hope of ever putting an end to this long, weary state of perplexity and trouble, unless I find at last some solid object which may give consistency to my movements by an absolute tranquillity, some clear light to show me my errors, some rule to settle my disorders, some secure rest for my instability, my wavering inconstancy.

Those are the three things which I need, which I must have. O my God! where shall I find them? *I have thought on my ways.* Human prudence is always unreliable; men's rules and laws and guiding principles are defective and fallible; this world's

goods are unstable and perishable. I see that I must raise my thoughts, my desires, my aspirations higher. I see, I see in the Law of God an infallible guide, a certain rule of life, an immutable peace. I hear the living voice of Jesus the Saviour of the world. He says: "*I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life* (John xiv. 6). I am the sure Way, which you may follow with no uncertainty; I am the infallible Truth, never varying, faultless, which will guide and govern you; I am the Life, the true Life of your soul, which will make all your days full of a perfect peace, most sweet, most calm, most unruffled, most enduring." Why, then, should I hesitate any longer? Away with doubts and perplexities; away with irresolution and delay. *I have thought on my ways;* and at last, at last, O Lord, *I have turned my feet unto Thy testimonies.*

XIV

CHRISTIAN PEACE

(Synopsis of Sermon)

By Bourdaloue

"Jesus came and stood in the midst of them, and said: Peace be to you" (John xx. 19).

The peace that Christ leaves to His followers is twofold: peace to the understanding by submission to faith, and peace to the heart by submission to the law. That is to say, faith must rule our understanding if we would have it be tranquil and undisturbed; and the law of God must reign in our heart if we desire it to enjoy solid happiness.

Peace of Mind.

Peace to the understanding by submission to faith. Yes; without this submission to faith it is impossible for the understanding ever to find rest. Take for instance a man who is determined to believe nothing but what pleases him, without deferring in any sort of way to faith. On what prop will he lean? what will be his support and stay? Either he will live his life in a state of absolute indifference as regards religion, or he will construct a special religion for himself, a religion that shall be in exact accordance with his own particular views. If he lives in total indifference to religion, that is to say, without troubling

himself to consider whether there is a God and a future life or not, it is easy to see how miserable is his condition. What peace can he enjoy, not knowing either what he is or what he will be, and abandoning to chance the question of eternal happiness or never-ending torment? If, on the other hand, he makes a religion of such a kind as his reason approves, fashioning it according to his own whimsical views and the guidings and promptings of his own unassisted nature, he will be just as far from finding peace and content; and why? Because a wise man, little as he may know himself, cannot fail to be convinced of three things concerning his reason—namely, that it is subject to error, that it is naturally inquisitive, and that, for the most part, its knowledge is nothing more than a bundle of opinions, leaving it always in a state of uncertainty even as to the truth which it may occasionally propound. Now, it is very certain that those three things are absolutely incompatible with repose of mind.

If I am wise, then, I cannot build up my religion upon the mere foundation of my reason. I know that my reason is subject to a thousand errors, especially in what concerns that religion. Take for example the pagans—the Egyptians, the Romans; people in all other respects so highly civilized and cultivated, but who fell into tremendous errors with regard to the worship of the Deity. Take also the heretics, so many in number; and there is no form of heresy, however extravagant, that has not found, that does not find, its followers. Secondly, who does not know that the chief characteristic of our understanding in forming its judgments, at least on most

subjects, is uncertainty, fickleness, irresolution—qualities directly in opposition to the repose which it seeks? Look for instance at the so-called strong-minded freethinkers * of the world, who, while possessing very little religion themselves, are continually reasoning upon the subject. They reason indeed, but without knowing what they do believe or what they do not, uncertain on all points, and demolishing to-day what they tried to advance yesterday. Thirdly, what is the origin of that confusion and strife of individual minds which has in all ages marked the progress of heresy? What but the pride of human reason? Every man set himself up as his own and his neighbour's master and teacher, and dogmatised according to his own sweet will. If we had nothing but that greedy thirst for knowledge, that insatiable craving for novelty of food for intellect and imagination, could we ever hope to gain peace for our understanding?

We see, then, that in order to put ourselves in possession of that blessed peace to which our understanding aspires and for which it longs so ardently, there is a something wanting, a something strong and unwavering which checks and restrains its curiosity, a something certain which remedies its inconstancy, a something infallible which corrects its errors. Now

* "Do freethinkers know that it is only ironically they are called strong-minded (*esprits forts*)? A sober-minded, cool-headed, chaste, and honourable man, who affirms there is no God, at least is dispassionate, but such a man is not to be found."—La Bruyère.

"Atheism is a mark of strength of mind, but only to a certain degree."—Pascal.

"It was Huxley and Herbert Spencer and Bradlaugh who brought me back to orthodox theology. They sowed in my mind my first wild doubts of doubt. The Rationalists made me question whether reason was of any use whatever."—G. K. Chesterton.

those are the three characteristics of faith. For faith sets bounds to our reason, by reducing all its teaching to this one single principle, *God hath said it;* faith applies a remedy to our inconstancy, our fickleness, our love of change and novelty, by settling our wayward minds into that holy and happy disposition in which we would far rather renounce all the illumination of nature and all the knowledge that comes to us through the senses only, than not believe what we do believe; finally, faith guides and safeguards man's reason against all the assaults of falsehood and error, because being based upon Divine revelation it is as infallible as God Himself.

Moreover, our faith is not in any respect an ignorant, an imprudent, or a blind one. It is not an ignorant faith; for before believing we are allowed to satisfy ourselves whether the thing that we are called upon to believe is revealed by God or not. It is not an imprudent faith; since it is founded upon motives which have satisfied the greatest men the world has ever known. It is not in any respect a blind faith; since to the obscurity of those mysteries which it reveals to us it unites a species of evidence, and that evidence is the revelation of God. This is what puts the final touch to the perfect calming of my understanding.

If, however, I turn aside from the path of faith, I find myself at once lost in a labyrinth, in which I turn and turn without ever finding my way out. If, in this condition, I make up my mind to renounce wholly and for ever that faith which was my guiding light, I am driven to the utmost extremity, that of no longer acknowledging God, the Eternal Father, the Incarnate Saviour, the Ever-Blessed Paraclete.

Now, before arriving at such a point as this, through what agonies of struggle and conflict must we not pass? on what troubled waves of perplexing thought must not our minds be tossed?

Let me now suppose that I am speaking to a free-thinker, to one who has abandoned that faith which secures peace to my understanding. Which of us, do you think, risks the more; which of us has the more to fear, being what we are? Believing what I believe, nothing worse can befall me than to find that I have during my life on earth deprived myself unnecessarily and fruitlessly of certain pleasures forbidden by the law of that faith which I profess, and indeed forbidden by reason itself: whereas you, if that which you do not believe is none the less true, put yourself in danger of eternal damnation.*

Yes, blessed are they who believe and who have not seen! Our condition may in this respect be even more blessed than that of the Apostles; for they had seen the miracles of Jesus Christ, and we believe without having seen them.

Peace of Heart.

Peace of heart by submission to the law. First, we cannot resist God and have peace; and, secondly,

* "Now, what evil will happen to you in taking the side of Christian faith? You will be trustworthy, honourable, humble, grateful, generous, friendly, sincere and true. In truth, you will no longer have those poisoned pleasures, glory and luxury, but you will have other pleasures. I tell you that you will gain in this life, at each step you make in this path you will see so much certainty of gain, so much nothingness in what you stake, that you will know at last that you have wagered on a certainty, an infinity, for which you have risked nothing."—Pascal.

Cf. Massillon's sermon on the Certainty of a Future State.

it is also practically impossible not to have peace when we submit ourselves to God.

We cannot resist God and have peace. God, says St Augustine, being (as He is) man's supreme good and his last end, the heart of man cannot be at peace except in as far as it is united to God. Now, in this present life it is only united to Him by voluntary submission to His Divine Law. The sinner desires to live in a state of absolute independence, and hence he brings upon himself a whole train of miseries; his reason becomes his enemy, his faith condemns him, his religion terrifies him, his conscience gnaws him. Has not the one single thought, "I am the object of God's wrath, I am exposed to His most fearful chastisements"; has not this thought, I say, power to create in the soul of a sinner a species of hell? Therefore it is that the Wise Man, addressing himself to God, cries out: "O Lord, if Thou wilt punish the sinner it is enough that Thou shouldst leave him to himself; Thou hast no need to arm the creature against him."

Let us, on this subject, consult experience. Can we say, from what we see around us, that the sinners of our day enjoy true peace? What is their life? what but a state of slavery in which their passions and their vices dominate them,* a perpetual dependence upon the world and its laws, a servile subjection to the creature? What is their life? A long succes-

* "He that delivers himself up to sensuality barters away his liberty for his delight, and sells himself for what he buys."—SENECA.

"He that will not obey the laws of God must obey his own passions, which are the worst tyrants; he must obey the words and the humours of others. In short, to serve God is perfect freedom; all else is mere slavery, let the world call it what it please."—MATTHEW ARNOLD.

sion of disappointed hopes, unattained aims, pleasures that pall, all combining to make the sinner at once guilty and miserable.

But yet these sinners often possess all that makes men happy in this life; they are rich, powerful, high in rank and position. I, however, maintain that all that is not what makes men happy; for do we not every day of our lives see men who are happy without any of these things, and others who are miserable although they have them all? It is, however, quite true that in the world's opinion they are counted happy. Yes; but what constitutes happiness or misery is not decided by the opinion or ideas of others, but by our own ideas, our own opinion, our own feeling. But then they themselves declare that they have peace. They say so, it is true; but while their lips make the assertion their heart gives the lie to it.

Secondly, I have said that it is practically impossible to be without peace if we are submissive to God. Peace, unmovable, unchangeable, eternal, with God, with our neighbour, even with ourselves! This is the blessed state of the just. Such was the state of St Paul, and of the great army of martyrs; such is the state of innumerable Christians who are faithful to the law. Such, O my God! (dare I say it?) such is the state in which I have sometimes found myself, and in which I still find myself, when my heart, when my whole soul and being turns to Thee!

XV

PROVIDENCE*

(Synopsis of Sermon)

By Bourdaloue

Two things (according to St Augustine) are capable of touching man and of making an impression upon his heart—duty and self-interest; duty, because he is a reasonable being; self-interest, because he loves himself. These two things are, generally speaking, his springs of action. But, adds St Augustine, it is absolutely necessary that these springs should be moved at one and the same time in order to produce their full effect upon the heart of man. For duty apart from self-interest is feeble and languid, and self-interest divorced from duty is mean and base. The two, however, when united, possess an almost infallible virtue, and are a force in themselves which it is scarcely possible to resist.

Duty and self-interest constrain us to acknowledge that there is a Providence and to yield submission to it. Now consider for a moment the utter disorder and the deplorable unhappiness of man when he refuses submission to Almighty God; his disorder as

* A translation of Bossuet's sermon on Providence is included in our former volume of "Great French Sermons." See the Abbé H. Brémond's *The Mystery of Newman* (London, 1907), pp. 144-150, where Newman's preaching is compared with that of the great French school.

regards his duty, his wretchedness as regards his own self-interest. In a word, nothing can be more criminal than the state of the worldly man who refuses to submit to Providence; and nothing more miserable than the state of that same individual who will not follow its guidance and conform to its rules and regulations.

Crime of the Ungodly.

Nothing, I say, can be more criminal than the state of the worldling who refuses submission to Providence. For he dispenses with all idea of this Divine Providence, renounces it, abjures it, either from a spirit of infidelity, because he neither recognises it nor believes in it; or else simply from a rebellious and defiant pride, which, even while it recognises and believes in such a Providence, is still resolved not to yield it the submission that is its due.

Say that he is actuated by a spirit of infidelity and does not believe in Providence. But if so, what a terrible state of anarchy, confusion, disorder of every kind, must desolate this human soul! * For in that case he must have lost the knowledge of God altogether, or else have made for himself a God neither just nor wise nor merciful, a God having no

* "There is nothing good in atheism. Will men be more virtuous for not acknowledging a God who enjoins the practice of virtue? Assuredly not. I would have princes and their ministers acknowledge a God—nay, more, a God who punishes and who pardons. Without this restraint I should consider them ferocious animals, who, to be sure, would not eat me just after a plentiful meal, but certainly would devour me were I to fall into their clutches when they are hungry, and who, after they had picked my bones, would not have the least idea that they had done anything wrong."—Voltaire.

"Not Christians, but Freethinkers, have been the best friends of despotism."—Lecky, *Rationalism in Europe*.

care for His creatures (for, apart from His Divine Providence, the God Whom we adore would have none of these tender and paternal attributes); and, in either of the cases which we are supposing, the impiety of this man would be equally great, greater even than that of the pagans of ancient days, seeing that among them there were very few who denied the existence of a Providence. But this is not enough; he does not stop here, he even ceases to believe the evidence of his senses and of his own reason. And if you ask how this can be, I will show you. He sees a state or country orderly, well-regulated, he concludes at once that there is a master governing and directing it; yet he will not allow his reason to bring him to the same conclusion with regard to the affairs of the world at large.* Moreover, there is not a man on earth who has not at some period of his life found himself in circumstances either of danger and difficulty, or of extraordinary good fortune and happiness; proving indisputably, and in a manner touching his own personality most closely, the existence of a Providence. And this is especially true in the case of men who make some figure in the world and who play an active part in its intrigues and complexities. And yet these are the very persons who have the least faith in Providence, and who seem to make the greatest mistakes in their judgment as to its dealings and operations. Their blindness extends even further, for they will not freely and generously, as a Christian should do, give that acknowledgment

* "Every period of history is a page in the book of God's Providence."—CARDINAL MERCIER.

"Nature is but a name for God's normal and continuous government, and chance is but a nickname for His unseen Providence."—DEAN FARRAR.

of their entire, if reluctant, conviction of the existence of Providence which is often wrung from them by necessity or, rather, by the fierce constraining force of grief and despair. This worldly man who forgets God in prosperity is the first to murmur against Providence when misfortune overtakes him. Yet there is something even more surprising, and it is that very often a man will doubt the existence of Providence for the very same reasons which undeniably and most plainly prove that there is a Providence. For he grounds his doubts upon the disorders and inconsistencies, the continual upheavals and disturbances which convulse the world; and yet, as St Chrysostom asks such an objector, what is the cause of all such disturbances and irregularities? what but the resistance to order? and what is the order so resisted but Providence? These disturbances and irregularities scandalise men; and is not the very fact that they are scandalised by them a convincing testimony to the existence of Providence, which ordains that all these things should be unauthorised by any human code of laws, should be punishable offences, and always sooner or later a scandal in the eyes of the world? If nothing could scandalise men, crime would indeed hold its own, and even get the upper hand; and in order that this may not be so, Providence makes vice be loathed and virtue loved.

What is it that makes the man of the world rise up in rebellion against Providence, so that even while he believes that there really is such a thing, a living force always at work round about him, he nevertheless refuses to submit to it? Is it simply pride of heart, which cannot and will not own itself a mere

puppet in the hands of an irresistible power? What folly! what temerity! to believe in a Providence which presides over the government of the world and yet to refuse to be ruled by it or to act in concert with it! But so it is. This it is which turns the world upside down, and makes it a veritable chaos, makes confusion, disturbance, distraction where peace and order should reign. Men believe in a Providence and live as though they held no such belief. Were it otherwise, if they permitted themselves to be led and ruled by their faith in that Divine Guide they would cease to be passionate, overbearing, vain, jealous, ungrateful to God, unjust towards their fellow-men. They have all these vices, only because they have forsaken the ways of Providence.

And when men do forsake that safe and direct road marked out for them by unerring Wisdom, what other paths do they take? There are several, all equally displeasing to God, all leading away from Him. One man lives by hazard, blindly following wherever fortune beckons him to come; another makes up his mind to govern himself according to the dictates of human prudence. There is not much to choose in either of these two devious ways. To have no other guiding principle, no other rule of conduct, than what fickle fortune offers is to fall into the errors of pagan idolatry. An idolatry which even the sages of paganism themselves condemned. An idolatry with which God reproached the Israelites. An idolatry which is nevertheless unhappily only too common among Christians, and especially among those who sit in high places and are the mouthpieces of public opinion. Again, to make up our minds to be guided by human prudence

is pride; it means relying upon ourselves, being unwilling to depend upon anyone but ourselves; and, what is a matter of infinite consequence, it means taking upon ourselves before God the responsibility of all the miserable results which may attend upon our pursuing this line of conduct, and laying upon our own shoulders the heavy burden of its sin. When, on the other hand, I have recourse to God, and, in the spirit with which my holy religion inspires me, calmly and deliberately ponder the great question of how I ought to rule my life, of how I ought to think and speak and act at all times and in all places; when, having done this, I believe that I have come to a right conclusion, I may then feel assured, not only hopefully but confidently, that I have decided aright, or that if I have failed in any respect God Himself will supply what is wanting in me. This is why Solomon, the wisest of men, utters this prayer: *Give me, O Lord, that wisdom which is seated with Thee on Thy throne, that she may labour with me, and make me know what pleaseth Thee* (Wisdom ix. 4, 10).

Unhappiness of the Ungodly.

Nothing is more miserable than the condition of a man who refuses to conform to the guidance of Providence. For then, in the first place, he lives his life without guidance; secondly, by forsaking God he obliges God to forsake him; thirdly, he deprives himself thereby of the sweetest, say rather, of the only consolation possible in trials and distresses such as may befall him; fourthly, refusing to depend upon God by a free and voluntary submis-

sion, he is, in spite of himself, brought to depend upon Him by a submission which is forced and from which there is no escape.

When I say that he is left with no guidance, do not misunderstand me. He is left with none that is safe and sure. For only two courses of action in this matter are open to him. Either he must depend entirely upon himself, or he must lean upon his fellow-men. Now, whichever of these two courses he may adopt his condition is equally deplorable. To be reduced to the condition of having no resource to fall back upon except oneself—could anything be more terrible? Supposing that I had committed a capital offence and that my life hung in the balance; if I had no counsel learned in the law to take up my case, no voice to plead for me but my own, I should indeed feel myself lost. And what reliance can any man place on himself, blind, fickle as he is, continually swayed by caprice, and the slave of his passions? It is true that he is a rational being, and can therefore summon reason to his aid; but is not his reason so limited, is it not so poor and dull a lamp shedding such feeble flickering light, that it is far more likely to distress and perplex him by the strange distorted shadows which it throws upon his path as well as by the very faint illumination which at all times it sheds there, than to guide him safely and surely on his way?

What must he do, then? Must he rely upon his fellow-men? But is there any slavery harder to endure, more humiliating, more repugnant to human nature, than a state of dependence? Think of the fickle, contemptuous treatment to which a dependent may be exposed, the reverses of fortune, the intoler-

able slights, the countless vexations and mortifications. In all ranks of life, whether among court favourites or among the beggars at our gates, these are the miseries of dependence. It is a perpetual captivity.

We have said that the worldly man in forsaking God obliges God at the same time to forsake him. Yes; because the Eternal God will not always be silent. He suffers man for a time to murmur against Him and pour forth bitter complaints and lamentations over the hardness of his lot; then, in His turn, He answers: *Where are thy gods in whom thou hast trusted? Let them arise now and come to help thee* (Deut. xxxii).

There is therefore no consolation for a man abandoned thus by God, after the creature in his blindness has himself abandoned the Creator. There are afflictions in life to which it is impossible for the world to afford any relief. Now a Christian who submits to the decrees of Providence finds in that very submission his support and consolation; while, on the other hand, the unbeliever, struck down by the force of some sudden calamity, seems as though possessed by the despairing fury of the lost, blaspheming God, raging against fate, refusing pity, drinking to the very dregs his bitter cup of pain and misery.*

But yet, rebel and sinner though he may be, is not this man still under the dominion of Providence? He is indeed, but under that of a Providence wholly just and therefore terribly stern in its dealings. A

* "Christianity brings home to us, as nothing else could do, that God is no indifferent spectator of our sorrows, and in so doing affords the surest practical alleviation to a pessimism which seems fostered alike by the virtues and the vices of our modern civilization."—A. J. Balfour, M.P.

Providence which makes the sinner conscious of its existence by vengeance; by vengeance sometimes secret and known only to the sinner, sometimes patent to the eyes of the whole world; sometimes by means of prosperity which intoxicates him, sometimes by adversity which overwhelms him.

Thus did God treat a Pharaoh, a Nebuchadnessar, an Antiochus, and many another. If, then, we have any regard for our duty and our interest, let us yield submission to our God and to His Providence. Let us ask of Him that His will may be fulfilled in us, both now on earth and hereafter in Heaven.

XVI

THE NECESSITY OF REVELATION

By Massillon

Revelation is necessary to guide man through the dark mazes of the present life: for his reason is weak, and must be assisted; it is diseased, and must be healed; it is changeable, and must be fixed. It is revelation alone which supplies the help necessary to assist and enlighten reason, the remedy to cure it, and the curb and the rule to restrain and guide it.

I say, first, that human reason is weak and requires aid. Alas! we comprehend neither ourselves nor the objects that surround us. We know not how we have been formed, by what imperceptible gradations our bodies have received structure and life, what the unnumbered springs and the Divine skill which move the whole machine. *I know not*, said the illustrious mother of the Maccabees to her children, *I know not how you were formed in my womb; I neither gave you the breath nor the life which you have received; it was not I who arranged and set in order the wondrous structure of your members; it was the invisible hand of Him Who created the universe* (2 Macc. vii. 22-23). Even our bodies are a mystery in the consideration of which the human mind is lost and confounded, and whose secrets we never shall thoroughly fathom; He alone Who pre-

sided at their formation can fully comprehend and explain them. Likewise, that breath of the Divinity which animates us, that portion of ourselves which renders us capable of knowledge and love, is unknown to us; we know not how its desires, its fears, and its hopes are originated, nor how it can give to itself its ideas and images. None has yet been able to comprehend how this spiritual being, so different in its nature from matter, could have been united to the body by bonds so indissoluble that these two substances should form only the same whole, and that the blessings and the calamities of the one should become also those of the other. We are, therefore, a mystery to ourselves, said St. Augustine; and even as regards that vain curiosity which seeks to know everything, we shall find it difficult to say how that desire for knowledge was first excited in our minds.*

Round about us, too, we find nothing but enigmas; we live as strangers upon the earth, and amid objects which we comprehend not. Nature is to man a sealed book; and the Creator, for the purpose (it would seem) of confounding human pride, has spread an impenetrable obscurity over the face of this abyss.

O man, lift up thine eyes! consider those grand luminaries which are suspended above thy head, in that immeasurable space where thy reason is confounded and lost. *Who*, said Job, *hath formed the*

* "Impenetrable mysteries surround us on every side; we are ignorant of our very selves; we know neither our own nature nor the principles that actuate us. Yet we are foolish enough to desire to investigate and to know everything, and we are blind to the fact that our knowledge is limited."—ROUSSEAU.

"There is not anything that can so suddenly flood the mind with shame as the conviction of ignorance, yet we are all ignorant of nearly everything there is to be known."—HILAIRE BELLOC.

sun, and hath given names to the innumerable stars? Explain, if thou canst, their nature, their use, their properties, their situations, their distances, their extraordinary phenomena, the regularity or the eccentricity of their courses. Our age has discovered something; it has made a little better conjecture than the ages which preceded us; yet how little it has taught us in comparison with the things of which we still remain ignorant!

Descend to the earth, and tell us, if thou canst, who confines the winds in their treasury, who regulates the course of the thunderbolt and of the tempest, who sets limits to the fury of the waves, and by whom is the regularity of the tides controlled; explain to us the surprising properties of the plant, the mineral, and the elements; discover how gold is purified in the bowels of the earth; unravel, if thou canst, the wondrous skill that enters into the formation of the insect which crawls beneath thy feet; assign a reason for the different instincts of animals. Turn in any direction; nature, in every part, presents us only with enigmas.* O man! thou understandest not the objects which are continually before thee; wilt thou presume to comprehend the deep and eternal mysteries of God? Nature is replete with mysteries; and wouldst thou a religion that has none?

* "We weigh matter; we measure it; we decompose it; but if we endeavour to go beyond those gross and material operations, we find ourselves totally incapable, an abyss confronting us. What incomprehensible things are we not obliged to admit even in geometry! Could anyone conceive how two lines, separated and not even an inch asunder, could be ever approaching each other and never meet?"—VOLTAIRE.

"What do I know of substance or matter? Just as much as the greatest philosophers, and that is nothing at all."—CARD. NEWMAN.

"The mysteries of the Church are child's play compared with the mysteries of nature."—T. H. HUXLEY.

Thou knowest not the mind of man; and wouldst thou fathom the secrets of the Almighty? Thou art not acquainted with thyself; and wouldst thou that thy feeble mind should grasp that which is so much above thee? The universe, which God has left open to thy curiosity and inquiries, is a labyrinth in which thou art lost; yet thou wouldst that the mysteries of revelation, which He has presented only to thy docility and respect, should possess nothing beyond thy finite powers! Oh, blindness! If everything except religion were clear, thou mightest, with some appearance of reason, mistrust its obscurities; but since every external object is incomprehensible to thee, the secrets of God (as St. Augustine says) ought to render thee more respectful and attentive, not more incredulous.

The necessity of revelation is therefore founded, in the first place, on the weakness of human reason; it is also founded on its deep degeneracy. And, in truth, what was more natural to man than the knowledge of his God, the author of his being and felicity, his first cause and his last end? What was more natural to man than to adore His wisdom, power, and goodness, and all the Divine perfections of which He has engraven such deep and conspicuous marks in His creation? Nevertheless, review those ages of darkness and superstition which preceded the Gospel, and see to what man had degraded his Creator, to what he had resembled his God. There was in the created world nothing, however vile, which his impiety did not deify; and man was the noblest divinity that was worshipped by man. And if from religion you pass to morality, all the principles of natural equity were effaced, and man no longer bore

written in his heart the work of that law which nature had engraven thereon. Plato, that wise philosopher who (according to St Augustine) approaches so very near to the truth, would annul the holy institution of marriage; and permitting a brutal confusion among men, he would confound the paternal names and rights which nature itself has at all times respected even in animals; he thus would give to the earth men all uncertain of their origin, each coming into the world without parents, so to speak, and consequently without ties, tenderness, affection, or humanity, every man being always liable to become, without his being aware of it, an incestuous person or a parricide. Others announced to mankind that pleasure was the supreme good; and whatever might have been the intention of the first author of that sect, it is certain that his disciples sought no other felicity than that of the brute. The most shameful disorders became maxims of philosophy. Rome, Athens, and Corinth witnessed excesses in which we seek in vain for anything human in man. The most abominable vices were consecrated; there were erected to them temples and altars; lewdness, incest, cruelty, perfidy, and crimes still more flagrant were enshrined as divinities; their worship consisted in public debaucheries and prostitutions. And the apostle who relates those things informs us that they were irregularities, not of the common people only, but of sages and philosophers, who had erred in the vanity of their own thoughts and whom God had delivered over to the corruption of their own hearts. O God! in permitting human wisdom to fall into such monstrous errors, Thou wouldst teach mankind that reason, left to its natural darkness, is capable of every excess,

and cannot assume the guidance of itself without falling into abysses from which it can be extricated only by Thy light and Thy truth.*

Finally, if the depravity of reason makes us feel the need of a remedy to cure it, its inconstancy and fickleness teach us likewise that a check and a rule are absolutely necessary to regulate it.

What vain disputes, what endless controversies, and what different opinions formerly divided the schools of pagan philosophy! And do not suppose that those disputes related to subjects which God seems to have left free to the discussions of men; they related to the nature of God Himself, to His existence, to the immortality of the soul, and to true felicity. Some doubted everything; others fancied that they knew everything. Some insisted that there was no God; others presented us with one of their own fashioning; some gave us for a God an indolent spectator of human affairs, calmly abandoning to chance the government of His own work, as a care unworthy of His greatness and incompatible with His repose; some others presented God as a slave to fate and subject to laws which He did not Himself impose; others, again, regarded Him as incorporated

* "There are branches of knowledge with respect to which the law of the human mind is progress. In mathematics, when once a proposition has been demonstrated, it is never afterwards contested. Here, therefore, there is a constant addition to the stock of truth. In the inductive sciences again, the law is progress. Every day furnishes new facts, and thus brings theory nearer and nearer to perfection. But with theology the case is very different. As respects natural religion—revelation being for the present altogether left out of the question—it is not easy to see that a philosopher of the present day is more favourably situated than Thales or Simonides."—MACAULAY.

"The inventions of men go on advancing from century to century: the goodness and the malice of men remain always the same."—PASCAL.

with the whole universe, the soul of that vast body, and composing, as it were, a part of that world which is entirely His work. Every succeeding age introduced some new extravagances respecting the nature and immortality of the soul: here it was a mere assemblage of atoms; there, a subtle fire; elsewhere, an attenuated ether; in another school, a portion of the Deity. Some supposed that it died with the body; others, that it existed before it; others imagined that it passed from one body to another, even from man to the horse, from the condition of a rational being to that of an animal destitute of reason. There were found some who taught that the true happiness of man was in the senses; a still greater number placed it in reason; others discovered it only in reputation and glory; many, in sloth and indolence. And that which is here the most deplorable is this, that the existence and nature of God, the immortality of the soul, the end and happiness of man—all of them points so essentially bearing on his destiny and so intimately connected with his everlasting misery or happiness — were everywhere discussed merely to amuse the leisure of the schools and the vanity of the sophists; they were but as idle questions that were debated, not for the sake of truth, but only for the exercise of ingenuity and pride. It is thus, great God! that Thou sportest with human wisdom.

And if we come down to Christian ages, who can enumerate the endless variety of sects which have at all times broken the unity of the Church in order to follow strange doctrines? What were the abominations of the Gnostics, the extravagances of the Valentinians, the fanaticism of Montanus, the contra-

dictions of the Manicheans? Pursue the inquiry from age to age; as there must needs be heresies for the trial of the just, you will find that every age has seen the Church deplorably rent by them.

Recall to remembrance the sad dissensions of only the past age. Since the defection of our brethren, what a monstrous variety in their doctrine! what a number of sects sprung from one sect! what numberless distinct assemblies in one same schism! That illustrious kingdom of England, which its proximity, its misfortunes, and its sacred and august pledges * have rendered so dear to us,—to how many different religious parties is it now a prey! That venerable English Church, formerly so fruitful in saints,—by what numerous opinions and sects is it now torn! † O revelation! O gift of God! O Divine torch, which comest to enlighten a dark place, how necessary art thou to man! O infallible rule, sent from Heaven and given in trust to the Spouse of Jesus Christ, always the same in all ages, ever independent of places, of times, of nations, and of interests, how needful art thou as a check upon the continual varia-

* King James II. of England and his Queen were then at Saint-Germain-en-Laye.

Cf. La Bruyère, *Les Caractères*: "Only one king (Louis XIV.), ever kind and magnanimous, received an unfortunate family with open arms. The others leagued themselves against him as if to avenge the support he was extending to a cause which was common to them all."

† "In the *History of the Variations of the Protestant Churches*, a bold and well-aimed attack, Bossuet displays the faults and follies, the changes and contradictions of our first reformers; whose variations (as he dexterously contends) are the mark of historical error, while the perpetual unity of the Catholic Church is the sign and test of infallible truth. I read, I applauded, I believed: and I surely fell by a noble hand."—Edward Gibbon, *Autobiography*.

tions of the human mind! O pillar of fire, at once so obscure and so luminous, how important is it that thou shouldst conduct the camp of the Lord, the tabernacle and the tents of Israel, through the perils of the wilderness, the snares, the temptations, and the dark and unknown paths of this life!

XVII

MARRIAGE

By Bourdaloue

The advantages accruing from marriage are reduced by St Augustine to these three principal ones: the propagation and education of children, which is its end; conjugal fidelity, which is its tie; and the sacramental character which is, as it were, its essential constituent in the law of grace. Matrimony is a sacrament; it is a bond of mutual companionship; it is a lawful propagation of children for God. But it must be remembered that from these three prerogatives of marriage there arise indispensable obligations to be fulfilled in the married state, great trials and difficulties to be encountered, and extreme spiritual dangers to be guarded against.

Obligations of Matrimony.

It is, without doubt, a great happiness for the Christian world, and for those in particular who are called by Providence to live in secular life, that the Son of God has sanctified matrimony by His ordinance; that matrimony is not a mere non-criminal state, as certain heretics would have represented it; nor merely a civil partnership, as it is among the pagans; nor a simple ceremony of religion, as it was

in the Old Law; but a sacrament which is a symbol and vehicle of the grace of Jesus Christ, a sacrament instituted for the sanctification of souls, representing one of the greatest mysteries, *the Word made flesh*, and applying His merits to such as receive it worthily. *This* (says St Paul) *is a great sacrament* (Eph. v). It is great inasmuch as it bears a relation to Jesus Christ our Divine Saviour. It is great only for the faithful who are the members of the mystical body of Christ: *I say unto you, in Christ and in the Church* (Eph. v) Hence we may infer that there are many obligations to which little heed is given by the world, and which nevertheless are imposed by matrimony. For since it is a sacrament in the law of grace, we are therefore not allowed to engage in it but with a pure and holy intention; we are not allowed to receive it but with a conscience free from sin; we are not allowed to use it but in conformity to the views of God and for an end worthy of God: and whoever is wanting in these duties commits an offence nearly approaching to the nature of a sacrilege, by profaning a sacrament.

But to those consequences little attention is paid in the world. And why? What is the reason why the rules of piety which Christians follow, and which they believe should be observed in the reception of the other sacraments, are ignored in the case of matrimony? Was not this sacrament instituted by the Saviour of the world Himself, as well as the other sacraments? Does it not contain mysteries as elevated as the other sacraments do? Does it not require dispositions as perfect, as Christian a motive, a purity of heart as entire, as the other sacraments do?

All this we know in theory; but in practice people often make a difference between this and other sacraments. They have no scruple in contracting marriage upon merely human considerations. They celebrate it at the foot of the altar in a state of actual sin. If you would have me declare to you candidly what I think of the matter, it is one of the most material irregularities in the Christian world. People seem no longer to regard wedlock as a sacred thing, but as a temporal affair, a mere negotiation. Shall I say it? The very heathens were more religious, wise, and reasonable in this respect. If matrimony was not a sacrament among them, neither was it, as it is becoming among us, a mercenary traffic by which people give themselves to one another, influenced neither by a reasonable inclination nor a real esteem or personal merit. And hence arises a very common and a very deplorable deordination; namely, that after marriages contracted without mutual attachment criminal attachments are formed without marriage. Anyhow, what cannot sufficiently be deplored is, that although matrimony includes in its essence the quality of a contract and that of a sacrament, people pay no regard but to the former, which is of an inferior order, and absolutely neglect the other, which is quite supernatural and divine. As a contract, it is managed according to all the rules of prudence. How many treaties, conferences, and meetings, articles and conditions, precautions and measures! But, as a sacrament, it is concluded without reflection or preparation. They think that all consists in a few external ceremonies practised by the Church, of which they acquit themselves without recollection or the spirit of religion. Now,

is it possible that a sacrament thus profaned should draw down upon you those succours of grace which God has annexed to it? And if those aids be withheld from you, how will you be able to fulfil the duties of your state?

Secondly, consider the obligations imposed by matrimony, not only as a sacrament, but as a bond of mutual companionship. The companionship I speak of is not only in appearance but in affection. *Husbands, love your wives,* says St. Paul (Eph. v.); and you, wives, love those whom Providence has given you for husbands. The rule you must follow is to love each other *even as Christ loved the Church* (Eph. v.). Love each other with a respectful love; because a familiarity without respect leads insensibly and almost infallibly to contempt. Love each other with a faithful and exclusive love, so as to leave father and mother for the sake of a husband or a wife (for such are the express words of the law of God), and so as to break every other tie that might captivate the heart to the detriment of your conjugal love. Love each other with a helpful and thoughtful love, which obviates difficulties, compassionates weaknesses, inspires a conformity of mind and thought, and keeps up harmony of wills. Love each other with a constant and enduring love, which overcomes vexations and disagreeable humours, suspicions and jealousies, rancour and animosities. In fine, love each other with a Christian love; for here I may apply the saying of St Paul, that the virtuous Christian woman is the sanctification of her husband. Such were those illustrious princesses who sanctified empires by converting and sanctifying the princes of whom they were alike the spouses and the apostles.

Such, ladies, ought you to be doing in your families, as they so gloriously and with such merit did in behalf of states. The best proof you can give your husbands of a true love is to wean them from vice and to lead them to the service and way of God, employing for that purpose all your thoughts, all your desires, all your counsels, all your cares, and encouraging yourselves to persevere in this holy work by that excellent saying of St Jerome to Læta. She was the daughter of a man addicted to idolatry, but whom his wife by vigilance and patience at last induced to embrace the Christian faith. "Now," says St Jerome, "it could not be otherwise; so great a zeal as that of your mother for her husband's salvation could not have had any other effect. And for my own part, I verily believe that if Jupiter himself, whom the pagans worship, had lived in so holy a union and companionship, he would have believed in Christ our Lord."

But the reverse of that is extremely general in these times. You know it well, as it happens every day before your eyes. This mutual fellowship, which ought to be the cement and honour of families and their best support, and which husband and wife should mutually preserve as the most precious treasure of their life, is perpetually exposed to quarrels, aversions, separations, and sometimes to scandalous scenes; and all this because neither he nor she will at all contribute to its preservation. The wife is headstrong, whimsical, vain, and a great admirer of her own attractions; she is fond of plays, of living splendidly, of ornamental attire, of gay company, and of all the extravagances and silliness of life. The husband is imperious, jealous, fretful, morose,

and passionate; a man of pleasure and immersed in debauchery. And because they are unwilling to thwart their inclinations in the least—she to moderate her stubbornness, to regulate her whims, to set bounds to her amusements, to her dissipation, to her vanity, to her attachment to the world; he to abate his haughtiness, to mitigate his fretfulness, to lay aside his unjust suspicions and ill-founded disquiettude, to moderate his anger, and to forego the infamous practice of debauchery,—hence reciprocal complaints, murmurs, and reproaches unavoidably ensue. They conceive a disgust of each other; and not unfrequently, to prevent disorders of a worse nature, they find themselves forced to separate from each other. These divorces and separations are authorised indeed by human laws, but are not, on that account, void of all guilt before God. They are frequent in the world at this day; and we look upon them as the disgrace of our age, especially among Christians. To these divorces is owing the ruin of many ancient families, in which is fulfilled the saying of our Lord: *Every kingdom divided in itself shall be laid waste.* It is not uncommon to see married persons who are otherwise addicted to the works of godliness living apart from each other without scruple, not reflecting that the chief duty of real godliness is, in their regard and so far as it depends on their care, to remain in a fellowship which God Himself has formed, or which at least ought to have been formed by God.

And why did He form it? For the legitimate propagation and education of children. This is the third ground on which are based the most important and essential obligations of wedlock. For it is not enough

to have brought children into the world; they must be nursed and taken care of. It is not enough to nurse them and to care of them; they must be provided for. It is not enough to provide for them in a worldly manner; they must be instructed and brought up in a Christian manner. The most general irregularity on the part of parents is to instruct children in the ways of the world, and not to teach them the duties of a Christian; to attend to everything that concerns their fortune, and to neglect whatever furthers their salvation; to inspire them with sentiments that accord with the maxims and principles of the times, and not to mind whether or not their sentiments are in harmony with the maxims and principles of the Gospel; to forgive them nothing when there is question of a courteous demeanour and a knowledge of the world, and to be very easy in regard to godliness and the practice of piety. It is the province of parents to direct their children in the ways of God, and to make them persevere in His fear and love; to correct the vicious propensities of their children, and to give them an early relish of virtue; to remove and preserve their children from whatever may corrupt their hearts—domestic irregularities, loose conversations, dangerous company, obscene plays, bad books; to procure for their children pious instructions, to give them useful advice, and, above all, to give them good example, being particularly careful neither to say nor to do anything that may occasion scandal to souls so weak and so susceptible to every impression.

Such are the obligations of the married state. They are attended with difficulties, nay, with great

difficulties. To fulfil those obligations, the special assistance of Heaven is needed. And that assistance is required not only to fulfil the obligations of the married state, but to bear its difficulties, as I am going to set forth in the second part of my discourse.

Trials of Matrimony.

I have said, and I say it again, that marriage is a sacrament. To this is owing its great excellence in the law of grace; but to this also is due its slavery. The quality of sacrament, which renders it indissoluble, also and by consequence makes it a yoke, a subjection, a kind of slavery, whereby one gives up one's liberty. If the Son of God had not raised matrimony to the dignity of a sacrament, it would have been no more than a simple contract, more rigorous indeed than any other engagement whatever, but which, after all, might be broken in extreme necessity. Accordingly we find that among those pagans whose laws and jurisprudence were the most conformable to human reason the dissolution of marriage was authorized and practised. They dissolved the marriage bond when important reasons induced them to do so; they gave up alliances once they appeared prejudicial to the parties concerned. Almighty God Himself, in the Old Law, permitted the Jews to repudiate their wives; and although He granted them this privilege only in condescension to the hardness of their hearts, it was nevertheless a lawful power which they were at liberty to use. But in the Christian Church, that is, since Christ made marriage a sacrament and communicated to it the virtue of a sacrament, it carries with it the character-

istic of indissolubility. Acknowledged once valid, it always remain so. Although the conservation of life be at stake; although the destruction of kingdoms be threatened; although ruin hang over the universal Church, and all the powers of earth be combined in arms against her, marriage will last till death, which alone can put an end to it.

This, then, Christians, is what I call a slavery, and what is really such. For I ask you, Is not a state which brings you into subjection without your well knowing to whom you give yourself, in some measure a state of slavery? And all this is a consequence of matrimony. You belong to another, who had no property in you before, but to whom you now belong and have given an inalienable right over your person. By the priesthood I engage myself only to God and to myself: to God, my supreme Master, to Whom I already belonged; and to myself, who have from nature a power to rule and govern myself. But this dominion which you had over yourself you transfer by marriage to another person; and what is most difficult and most heroical in religious profession becomes the chief obligation of your state. Besides, I am not tied down by religious profession to any particular person; I am not always subject either to this person or to that, but sometimes to one and sometimes to another; and this must needs greatly alleviate my yoke. Whereas in matrimony your engagement is perpetual. If the person pleases you and is just such as your heart could wish, it is a great happiness: but if the husband pleases not the wife, or if the wife does not suit the husband, they are not, for that, the less tied together; and what a torment must be such a union! Too, previous to the engage-

ment in a religious state, there is a novitiate and time of trial; but such is not the case with respect to matrimony. You engage yourself, and you know not to whom; for you know not the spirit, the temperament, the dispositions, the qualifications of the person with whom you join in so strict an alliance, till it is too late to think of retracting. While this young man pays his addresses to you, he is all complaisance, all mildness, moderation, and virtue; but when the indissoluble knot has been tied, you may soon discover what he really is. You may see bluntness succeed to this affected mildness, violence to this supposed moderation, and debauchery to this hypocritical virtue. So long as this young woman remains unmarried, and her only wish is to give you her hand, she behaves with composure and counterfeits her character; but when once she finds that this circumspection is no longer so necessary, you may soon be plagued with her whims, fancies, stubbornness, and haughtiness. Do what you please, take all precautions, use what care and diligence you will, you must run some hazard in the marriage contract; and this made Solomon say that *a house and riches are given by parents, but a prudent wife is from the Lord* (Prov. xix.).

Realize, then, what such an engagement is, and such a servitude for all one's life without redress; an engagement which appeared to the Apostles of such grave consequence that they judged the state of celibacy to be preferable to it. *If the case of the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry* (Matt. xix.). And what reply did our Saviour make? Did He blame this view so unfavourable to matrimony. He approved of it; He complimented them

upon their having comprehended what others were unable to understand: *All men cannot take this saying* (Mat. xix.). The reason of that is that He plainly saw how heavy a burden it would prove for the greater number of those who should receive this sacrament. In saying this, my purpose is not to give you a horror of matrimony, but to let you see how greatly the Divine assistance is needed in the marriage state, and of what importance it is to beware of engaging in it against the will of God. Alas! how many have we seen, and do we see at this day, sinking and groaning under the galling yoke, or dragging it with difficulty and lamentably complaining of their misfortune! How many people in the world are happy in appearance, but repine in secret silence at the slavery to which they are reduced! the more to be pitied because they have scarce a right to our pity! For, who loaded them with these shackles, with the weight of which they are borne down? Was it God, Whom they neglected to consult? Was it not themselves?

What enhances the troubles of matrimony and makes them more insupportable is the companionship of which marriage is the tie. For although companionship, considered in itself, has always been looked upon as a good thing, yet on account of the extreme difficulty there is to find minds mutually agreeable and well assorted one to the other we may say in general that solitude is preferable to it. If we find it difficult to bear with ourselves, shall we find it easier to bear with another? I speak not of a thousand circumstances arising from the necessity of having all in common in married life. These are no other than the inconveniences of your condition,

but yet so general that even the marriages of kings and princes are not exempt from them. I shall confine myself to the diversity of temperaments which too frequently thwarts the happiness of man and wife. What contradictions and trials! What sources of mortification! What need of patience! A wise and sober husband wedded to a volatile and unsteady wife; a regular and virtuous wife mated to a dissolute and impious husband! Of so many marriages that we see contracted every day, how many are cemented by a sympathy of hearts? And should there be an antipathy, what martyrdom can be more cruel? This would not be so bad a case if the married persons would work thereby their sanctification; if they would carry their cross like good Christians, and of a sad necessity make a virtue. But the most deplorable circumstance of all is that these domestic trials and contradictions but serve to keep you the farther from God and to make you the more criminal before Him. Thus circumstanced, married persons seek comfort abroad; they turn their inclinations into a forbidden channel; and what irregularities does not this draw after it! What animosities and aversions do they not harbour in their breasts! With what murmurs and complaints, in what distress, despair, and resentment, is a long succession of years run out! They remain in these dispositions till death; and (as St Bernard says) all they do is to go from one hell to another, from a hell of sin and wickedness into a hell of pains and punishments.

But those, you say, are extremes. True; but yet, although they are extremes, they are common in the married state. If you had taken to this state by the appointment of God; if you had not chosen it of

your own rash choice, or had not taken to it but according to the will and views of God and under His guidance and protection, His grace would have made it supportable and easy, and His Providence would have watched over all your necessities. He would have brought you, as He did in the case of Rebecca, to the man that was appointed for you and who would be suitable to you. He would have given to your words a peculiar efficacy, and to your cares a particular blessing, to render this husband more gentle and compliant, to give him more steadiness and constancy, to withdraw him from his debauchery, to calm his uneasiness, to dissipate his jealousy. In times of low spirits and disgust, of discouragement and sadness, of crosses and vexations, to which you are exposed, He would have supplied you with a supernatural and divine force to sustain you; and by His inward unction (even when you were beset with external troubles) He would have made you taste in the bottom of your soul the sweets and joys of a holy peace. But since you blindly and of your own wilfulness put on (as I may say) your fetters, He suffers you to feel the whole weight and inconvenience of them. That is (and you know it but too well), He suffers you to be plagued with all the oddities of a whimsical husband, all the haughtiness of an imperious husband, all the harshness of a violent husband, all the stinginess of a covetous husband, all the dissipation of a prodigal husband, all the fastidiousness of an unaffectionate and indifferent husband, all the absurdities and preposterous notions of a jealous husband. As you do not seek in Christian patience and sage moderation a remedy for the ills which afflict you, He permits you to aggravate them;

He allows you to become a vain woman, an indiscreet woman, a woman addicted to worldly pleasures and dissipation, an obstinate and headstrong woman; so that you yourself also begin to be inconstant and to exhibit your hastiness and passion, your bitterness of soul and haughtiness of mind, and you and your husband accord in nothing but in stirring up the fire of discord and making your condition more and more wretched.

That is not all. A third source of affliction and sorrow in the married state is the bringing up of children (and I venture to call it an inexhaustible one). *A wise son* (says Solomon) *maketh glad his father; but a foolish son is the grief of his mother* (Prov. xi.). But, without in the least perverting the words of the Divine Spirit, I may add, in another sense, that the bringing up of children, whether regular or irregular in their conduct and behaviour, is generally for parents a cumbrous burden and a heavy cross. I speak not of the cares and attention which early infancy requires, subject as it is to a thousand weaknesses which you must bear with, to a thousand necessities which you must relieve, to a thousand accidents which you must guard against. Let us suppose them at a more advanced age, at a time of life when they begin properly to make themselves known either by their good or their bad qualities. I will suppose, if you will, that they are of good dispositions and have all the appearance of doing well hereafter. But are you thereby enabled to provide for their maintenance and advancement? Are you thereby certain of not losing them in the bloom of their youth? What a melancholy thing it is, for instance, to have a numerous family and to want the

means of providing for them! To have children of the highest capacity and not to be able to procure them employment! What sorrow and regret when an unforeseen accident, an unexpected death, snatches children away all at once, on whom their parents doted and built their fondest hopes! But what you know still better, because it is more common, is how much unfortunate parents undergo in bringing up undutiful and intractable children; in maintaining children without talent or genius; in correcting the faults of perverse children; in prevailing upon ungrateful and unfeeling children; in reforming vicious children, irregular and debauched children, prodigal and extravagant children.

But what occasion to enlarge any further upon this head? What can I say which you have not yourselves from experience a better knowledge of than I can pretend to? Is it not this trouble, O fathers and mothers, which plants thorns under your pillows? Is it not this which whelms you in the depths of melancholy, or drives you into frantic raptures of rage and despair? Is it not this which rives your hearts and make you say on so many occasions what the mother of Jacob and of Esau said: *If it was to be so, what need for me to conceive?* (Gen. xxv. 22). If these be the fruits of wedded love, had it not been better I had never thought of it? How happy the state in which, free and disengaged from all worldly care, one has nothing to mind but one's own person! This you say, and not without reason. But what is still more certain, and what you should reproach yourself with in the presence of God, is that therefore you ought not to have determined so hastily on a choice which involved consequences so grave;

that you ought to have taken proper measures by consulting Almighty God in prayer and by seeking good advice; that you ought to have weighed the matter thoroughly, not by the false maxims of the world, but by the precepts of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Dangers of Matrimony.

If every state of life be exposed to danger, we may safely say that the married state is one of the most dangerous. For in matrimony things must be reconciled which are not easily reconcilable, which are seldom met in conjunction, and which in the estimation of many seem to be incompatible: the problem is to reconcile conjugal liberty with continence and chastity, a true and intimate friendship for a creature with an inviolable fidelity to the Creator, and an exact, diligent, watchful care of temporal affairs with a detachment from the things of this world.

If anything enhances the crime of incontinence in the marriage state before Almighty God, it is the dignity of the sacrament. God has ordained for married persons laws which it is not allowable to transgress; and all the irregularities committed in matrimony, far from being excused or justified by the sacrament, derive therefrom a peculiar malignity and deformity. Of the three kinds of chastity, to wit, that of virginity, that of widowhood, and that of matrimony, conjugal chastity is (as St Jerome observes) the most difficult of attainment.

Secondly, there is the danger arising from mutual companionship, of which the effect should be so perfect a union of hearts that for your spouse you should

be disposed to give up everything, to sacrifice everything; but with this exception, so rare and delicate, that conjugal love do not encroach upon your love of God. Man and wife should be so devoted one to the other that at the same time both the one and the other be still more strongly attached to God. A wife, however disposed she may be to gratify all the reasonable inclinations of her husband, must still have fortitude enough to resist him whenever he would have her fall in with his passions, bear a part in his irregularities, lend an ear to his defamatory or impious discourses, join in his resentments, or abet his revenge. "But I am bound to obey him." No obedience is due to him in prejudice to the law of God. "But he will not cohabit with me." In that case his displeasure will be preferable to his esteem. "But there will be no peace or tranquillity in the family." You will enjoy peace and tranquillity of conscience, and that is enough. "But how is it possible to keep up perpetually that unshaken firmness and to act always resolutely and consistently?" That is not easy, I grant; and for this reason it was that I proposed it as one of the greatest difficulties of your state.

And that is what St. Paul meant to teach the Corinthians when he made the happiness of virgins consist in their not being divided between God and the world, and in their not being obliged to please men, but only Jesus Christ, the Spouse of their souls: *The unmarried woman and virgin thinketh on the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit* (1 Cor. vii. 34.). Whereas (he adds) a married woman is often at a loss how to preserve at the same time the affection of her husband and the

favour of God; being obliged to preserve, so far as she is able, both the one and the other, and yet not knowing on a thousand occasions how to reconcile both obligations. And that is what grieves her, what divides her heart, what fills her mind with contrary thoughts, wishes, and affections, what keeps her in continually-racking propensities and frequently in the most cruel uncertainties: *But she that is married thinketh on the things of the world, how she may please her husband* (1 Cor. vii. 34). Is it not thus that a weak complaisance has been the destruction of so many wives and brings such a number of them every day to ruin? They were in heart and by inclination mild, forbearing, regular, upright; but an insatiable and avaricious husband, a choleric and revengeful husband, a sensual and voluptuous husband, has induced them to become participators in his frauds, antipathies, and lusts.

What shall I say, and what may be said, of a third danger, which is always concomitant with the care of a family and the education of children? It is certain that the education of children lays a strict obligation on you to attend to temporal affairs. But it is also certain that this obligation is a rock on which it is not easy to avoid being wrecked. And who cannot see the extreme difficulty of reconciling together the care of property and a Christian detachment from that same property? According to the Gospel, if you neglect to provide for your children in a manner suitable to their condition, you incur guilt before God; and if, on the other hand, in making provision for your children you suffer your heart to be unduly possessed by the desire and love of riches, you endanger your eternal salvation. In

the married state you are not allowed, as others are, to forsake everything in order to follow Jesus Christ. You must possess, you must preserve, you must labour in a reasonable manner to acquire, earthly goods; but in possessing, preserving, and acquiring these earthly goods you must wean your heart from earthly affections. Hearken to the words of St. Paul: *This, therefore, I say, brethren: that they who have wives be as though they had none; and they that buy be as though they possessed not; and they that use this world be as though they used it not* (1 Cor. vii. 29-31). The reason for this is given by the same Apostle: *For the figure of this world passeth away* (1 Cor. vii.). Yet this inward disengagement from worldly things must not in the least diminish the vigilance necessary to safeguard your fortune and support your family. Now, to join together both the one and the other is what I call the heroic virtue of the state of matrimony. And how, you will say, is it possible to attain to this degree of the evangelical spirit of poverty? To this I answer, as our Saviour Himself answered to a somewhat parallel question: It is impossible for men, but not for God. It is impossible for those who intrude themselves unadvisedly and without the grace of God's call into the matrimonial state, or who, having this grace, use it not in the way they ought to use it. But to those who correspond with God's grace all is possible.

But if it was not by Divine appointment that you have entered into the married state, is there no remedy? or what are you to do? You must do what the penitent sinner does. He recovers by the grace of penance what he lost by forfeiting the grace of innocence. In like manner, you will repair the evil

you committed in contracting marriage without having the first graces of that state; by recurring to God you must obtain His secondary graces. "Ah, my God," you ought to say to Him as fervently as the brother of Jacob said to Isaac, "*hast Thou but one benediction, Father?* True it is that I have deviated from the right path which was pointed out to me; but hast Thou therefore rejected me? *Give me likewise, I beseech Thee, Thy benediction.*"

XVIII

RESPECT IN THE TEMPLES OF GOD

By Massillon

The whole universe is a temple filled with the glory and the presence of the Deity. Wherever we go, says the Apostle, He is always beside us; in Him we live, move, and have our being. If we mount up to the heavens, He is there; if we traverse the ocean on the wings of the winds, it is His hand that guides us; He is alike the God of the distant isles which know Him not, and of the kingdoms and regions which invoke His name.

Nevertheless, in all ages men have consecrated places to Him which He has honoured by a special presence. The Patriarchs erected altars to Him on certain spots where He had appeared. The Israelites in the desert regarded the Tabernacle as the place in which His glory and His presence continually resided. And having come to Jerusalem, they invoked Him with the solemnity of incense and of victims in that august Temple erected to Him by Solomon. It was the first temple consecrated by men to the true God. It was the most holy place in the universe; the only one wherein it was permitted to offer up gifts and sacrifices to the Lord. From all quarters of the earth the Israelites were obliged to come there to worship Him. While they were captives in foreign

kingdoms, their eyes, their wishes, and their homage were incessantly bent towards that holy place. When they were exiled in Babylon, Jerusalem and its Temple were always the source of their joy, the cause of their mourning, and the object of their worship and of their prayers; and Daniel chose to expose himself to all the fury of the lions, rather than to prove unfaithful to Sion. Jerusalem had even seen infidel princes, attracted by the sanctity and the fame of her Temple, coming to render homage to a God Whom they knew not; and Alexander himself, struck by the majesty of that place and by the august gravity of its venerable pontiff, remembered that he was but a man, and bowed his proud head before the God of Hosts Who was worshipped there.

The cruelty of tyrants obliged the first disciples of Christ to seek obscure and hidden places to conceal themselves from the rage of the persecutions, there to celebrate the Holy Mysteries and to invoke the name of the Lord. The majesty of ceremonial entered into the Christian churches only with that of the Cæsars. Religion had its Davids and its Solomons who blushed to inhabit superb palaces while the Lord had not whereon to lay His head: sumptuous edifices gradually rose up in our cities; the God of Heaven and earth again (if I may dare to say so) resumed His rights; and the temples themselves, where the demon had so long been invoked, were restored to Him as to their rightful master, were consecrated to His worship, and became His abode.

But here they are not empty temples like that of Jerusalem, in which everything took place figuratively. The Lord still dwelt in the heavens, said the Prophet, and His throne was still above the clouds;

but, since He has deigned to appear upon the earth, to hold converse with men, and to leave us in the Blessed Eucharist the real pledge of His Body and Blood really present under the veil of the sacramental species, the heavenly altar has no longer any advantage over ours; the victim which we here immolate is the Lamb of God; the bread of which we partake is the immortal food of the angels and blessed spirits; the mystical wine we here drink is that new beverage with which they make glad in the kingdom of the heavenly Father; the sacred canticle we here sing is that which the celestial harmony makes continually to resound around the Throne of the Lamb; our temples are those new heavens promised by the Prophet to men. We see not fully here (it is true) all that is seen in the Heavenly Jerusalem, for here below we see only imperfectly and as it were through a veil; but we possess Him, we enjoy Him, and Heaven has no longer any advantage over earth.

Now, our churches being a new heaven filled with the glory and the presence of the Lord, righteousness and purity are the first requisite to prepare us, like the blessed in the eternal temple, to appear in them; for the God before Whom we appear is a holy God.

In effect, the sanctity of God as He is present throughout the universe is one of the greatest motives held out by religion to induce us to walk before Him in virtue and holiness. As all creatures are sanctified by the intimate nearness of the Divinity Who dwells in them, and all places are full of His glory and immensity, the Sacred Scriptures incessantly warn us everywhere to respect the presence of God Who sees and watches us; on no occasion to offer to His eyes anything that may wound the sanc-

tity of His regards; and never to sully with our crimes that earth which wholly is His temple and the dwelling-place of His glory. The sinner who bears an impure conscience is a kind of profaner, unworthy of living upon the earth; for by the sole circumstance of his corrupted heart he everywhere dishonours the presence of the holy God Who is ever beside him, and he desecrates every spot where he bears his crimes.

But if the ubiquity of God is a reason why we should everywhere appear pure and without stain to His eyes, doubtless these places which are particularly consecrated to Him, our Catholic churches, in which the Deity (as I may say) corporally resides, much more require that we should appear in them pure and stainless, lest the sanctity of the God Who dwells in and fills them be dishonoured.

Thus, while the Lord had permitted Solomon to raise to His glory that Temple so famed for its magnificence and so venerable through the splendour of its worship and the majesty of its ceremonies, what rigid precautions did He not take lest men should abuse His goodness in choosing a special dwelling-place in their midst, and lest they should dare to appear there covered with stains and defilement! What barriers did He not interpose between Himself and man; and in drawing near to man, what an interval did He not leave between the spot filled with His presence, and the eyes of the people who came there to invoke Him!

Yet, after all, what did that Holy of Holies of the Jews, that spot so awful and inaccessible, contain? The tables of the law, the manna, the rod of Aaron; empty figures and the shadows of futurity. The

Holy God Himself, Who sometimes gave out from there His oracles, yet dwelt not there as He does in the sanctuary of Christians, the gates of which are thrown open to every believer.

If the goodness of God, in a law of love and grace, has no longer fixed those terrible barriers of old between Him and us; if He has broken down that wall of separation which removed Him so far from mankind, and has permitted every Christian believer to approach the Holy of Holies where He Himself now dwells in His Sacred Humanity, it is not that His sanctity exacts less purity and innocence from those who come to present themselves before Him. His design has only been to render us more pure, more holy, and more faithful, and to make us feel what ought to be the sanctity of a Christian who every week is obliged to endure, at the foot of the Altar, the presence of the God Whom he invokes and worships.

And for this reason it is that St Peter calls all Christians *a holy nation;* for they are all equally entitled to present themselves before the Holy Altar: *a chosen generation;* for they are all separated from the world and from every profane custom, and consecrated to the Lord and to His service: and *a royal priesthood;* for they all participate, in one sense, in the priesthood of God's Son, the High Priest of the New Law, and because the privilege of entering into the Holy of Holies, formerly granted to the Jewish High Priest alone, is become the common and daily right of every believer.

It is, then, solely through the sanctity of our baptism and of our consecration that these sacred gates are opened to us. If impure, we in some respect

forfeit this right, we have no longer a part in the Altar, we are no longer worthy of the assembly of the holy, and the temple of God is no longer for us.

Our churches ought therefore to be the houses of the righteous alone. Everything that takes place in them supposes righteousness and sanctity in the spectators: the Mysteries that we there celebrate are holy and awful mysteries which require pure eyes; the Victim we there offer up is the reconciliation of the penitent or the bread of the strong and perfect; the sacred anthems that therein are heard are the groanings of a contrite heart or the sighs of a chaste and believing soul. And on that account it is that the Church takes care to purify everything that is to appear on the Altar; she consecrates with prayers even the stones of these holy buildings, as if to render them worthy of forming the abode of the God Who dwells there; she exposes at the doors of our temples a water sanctified by prayer, and recommends the faithful to sprinkle it on their foreheads on entering the holy place, as if to complete their purification from any slight stains which might still remain on their souls.

The Church, it is true, opens the gates of our temples to the righteous and to sinners; she draws the veil of her sanctuary in presence even of the profane; and before beginning the awful mysteries her ministers no longer wait the departure of the sinful and unclean. But the Church supposes that, if you be not righteous in coming here to appear before the majesty of the God of holiness, you bring with you at least desires of righteousness and of penitence; she supposes that, if not yet altogether purified from your crimes, you at least feel contrition for them,

that you come to bewail them at the foot of the Altar, and that your regret for your faults is now to begin here your justification and sanctity.

Sinners, it is the desire for a more Christian life which alone can authorise your appearing in this holy place; and if you come not here to lament over your sins, but bring with you an actual and rooted affection for them, the Church, it is true, who sees not and judges not the heart, excludes you not from these sacred walls; but God invisibly rejects you. In His eyes you are accursed; you have come to stain, by your very presence, the sanctity of the awful Mysteries, and to seat yourselves in a place where you have no right to be.

For, my dear Christian, whoever you be who come to assist here, you come to offer up spiritually with the priest the stupendous Sacrifice of the Altar; you come to present to God the Blood of His Son, as the propitiation for your sins; you come to appease His justice, through the dignity and the excellence of these Holy Offerings, and to represent to Him the claim you have upon His mercy ever since the Blood of His Son has purified you. When you appear with a hardened and corrupted heart, without any sentiment of faith or any desire of amendment, you disavow the ministry of the priest who offers in your stead; you disavow the prayers he sends up to the Lord, those prayers in which, through the mouth of the priest, you entreat God to cast His propitious looks on these Holy Oblations which are upon the Altar and to accept of them in satisfaction for your crimes; you even insult the love of Jesus Christ Himself Who offers the great Sacrifice of His Body and Blood for your sanctification and Who presents you

to His Father as a portion of that pure and spotless Church which He has washed in His Blood.

What then are we to conclude? That if we are sinners we are to banish ourselves from our temples and from the Holy Mysteries? God forbid! Ah! then it is that we ought to come to this holy place in search of our deliverance; then it is that we ought to come to solicit, before the Altar, the tender mercies of the Lord ever ready in that place to lend a favourable ear to sinners; then it is that we ought to call in every religious aid to arouse in ourselves some sentiments of piety and repentance. And whither, O my brethren, shall we go when unhappily fallen under the displeasure of God? and what other resource could remain for us? It is here alone that sinners can find a refuge; here flow the quickening waters of the Sacraments, which alone have the virtue of purifying the conscience; here is offered up for us the Sacrifice of Propitiation, which is capable of appeasing God's anger excited by our sins; here the truths of salvation are enforced upon our hearts, and inspire us with hatred of sin and love of righteousness; here our ignorance is dispelled, our weakness sustained, our good resolutions strengthened; here, in a word, religion offers remedies for all our disorders. It is therefore sinners who ought most to frequent these holy temples; and the more their wounds are inveterate and hopeless, the more eagerly ought they to come here in search of a cure.

But if the sole state of guilt without remorse, without any wish for a change, and with an actual intention of persevering in sin, be a kind of irreverence by which the sanctity of our temples and of our Mysteries is profaned, what, O my God! shall it be

to choose these holy places and the hour of the awful Mysteries to come to inspire infamous passions, to form lascivious desires, to seek opportunities of gratifying sensuality? what shall it be to choose Thy presence, O God, to conceal the secret of an impure passion? Great God! when insulted on Mount Calvary, where Thou wert a suffering God, the tombs opened around Jerusalem; the dead arose, as if to reproach their descendants with the horror of their sacrilege. Ah! reanimate, then, the ashes of our fathers who await in this holy temple their blessed immortality; let their bodies rise out of these pompous tombs which our vanity has erected to them; and, inflamed with a holy indignation against irreverences which crucify Thee afresh and which desecrate the sacred asylum of the remains of their mortality, let them appear upon these monuments and (since our instructions and our threatenings are unavailing) let them upbraid their successors for their irreligion and sacrileges! But if the awe of Thy presence, O my God! be not sufficient to secure their respect, they would not be more reverent or religious were even the dead to rise up and admonish them (Luke xvi. 27-31).

XIX

THE DEATH OF THE SINNER

By Massillon

In vain do we put the thought of death from us; every day brings us nearer to the grave. Youth fades away; years rapidly advance; and, like *water spilt on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again* (2 Kings xiv. 14), we haste to plunge into the abyss of eternity, in which for ever overwhelmed we shall no more return to the world to retrace our steps.

I am aware that we daily speak of the shortness and uncertainty of life. The death of our neighbours, of our friends, of our relations, and of our sovereigns, often sudden, always unexpected, furnishes us with a thousand reflections on the frailty of man. We continually say that the world is nothing, that life is a dream, and that it is foolish in the extreme to be so greatly concerned for that which is to be of such short duration. But this is mere talk; this is a language which we yield to custom, but which custom at the same time leads us to forget.

Now, it is certain that you must, each one of you, go the way of your fathers. You will see the day arrive to which no other will succeed; and that day will be for you the day of eternity—happy if you die in the Lord, miserable if you die in your sins. One of these destinies awaits you: there will only be

the right and the left, the sheep and the goats, in the final condition of all men.

Allow me to set before you the miserable spectacle of the deathbed of the sinner. Nothing is more dreadful than the condition of that unhappy creature in his last moments. Which way soever he turns his thoughts, whether he recalls the past to his remembrance, or reflects on all that is taking place before him, or penetrates into that terrible hereafter which he already approaches, he finds nothing but what is overwhelming and hopeless and capable of awakening in him the most dark and dismal ideas.

For, what can the past present to a sinner stretched upon his dying bed; to one who no longer counts upon life, and who reads in the countenances of all who surround him the terrible intelligence that all is over with him? What does he behold in the numerous days he has spent upon the earth? Alas! only useless cares, momentary pleasures, and sins that will never be blotted out.

Useless cares. He remembers all that he has endured for a world which flies from him; for a fortune which vanishes from his sight; for a vain reputation which does not accompany him into the presence of God; for friends whom he is losing; for a sovereign who is about to forget him; for a name which will only be written upon the dust of his grave. How piercing will be the regret of the miserable being to perceive that, after the labour of a whole life, he has done nothing for himself! How bitter the consideration that he has done such great violence to himself, and still has not advanced one step towards Heaven; that he has thought himself too weak for the service of God, while he had strength

and constancy to be a martyr to vanity and to a perishing world! Ah! the sinner is overwhelmed and terrified at his blindness and error, and finds only an empty void in a life which the world had engrossed; perceiving, after the numerous years he has passed, that he has not even begun to live; leaving histories filled with his deeds, public monuments loaded with the events of his life, the world full of his fame, yet leaving nothing behind him which deserves to be written in the book of eternity and to follow him into the presence of God. It is then that he begins, but too late, to utter to himself words to which we have often listened: "Have I, then, lived only for vanity? O that I had done as much for God as I have done for my sovereign! Alas! was so much agitation and solicitude necessary to effect my ruin? Why did I not at least receive my consolation in this world? I should then have enjoyed the present, the moment which now escapes me, and all would not have been lost. But my life has been full of cares and anxiety—all to prepare myself for eternal misery. What folly to have endured more towards my own ruin than was required to secure my salvation! What folly to have regarded the life of the good as dull and insupportable, since they have performed for God nothing so difficult as what I have done for a world which is nothing and from which consequently I have nothing to expect!" *We have walked in difficult ways: we have erred from the way of truth* (Wis. v. 6-7).

On your deathbed you will see your whole life in a very different light from that in which it now appears. You now reckon the services that you render to the state, the posts that you fill, the ac-

tions in which you have distinguished yourselves, the wounds which still testify to your valour, the number of your campaigns, the authority attached to your commands; these all appear to you as realities. The public plaudits that accompany them, the rewards that follow them, the fame that publishes them, the distinctions that are attached to them; these all recall your past days to remembrance, as days filled up and rendered notable by memorable actions, and by events worthy to be handed down to posterity. You even distinguish yourselves in your own opinion from those idle persons of your rank who have always led an obscure, idle and useless life. But on a death-bed, in that last moment in which the world will fly from you and eternity approach, your eyes will be opened; the scene will change; the illusion which magnifies these objects will be dissipated: you will behold everything in its true light; and all that appeared to you so great, and which you performed only for the world, for glory, for fortune, will appear to you as no longer anything. *He shall open his eyes*, said Job, *and find nothing* (Job xxvii. 19). You will find nothing real in your past life except what you did for God; nothing worthy of praise, save works of faith and piety; nothing great but what will be worthy of eternity; and a cup of cold water given in the name of Jesus Christ, a single tear shed in His presence, the least sufferings endured for His sake, will appear to you more precious and valuable than all the wonders that the world admires and which are about to perish with the world.

The dying sinner will not only find wasted effort in his past life; but also the remembrance of his sinful pleasures will confound and overwhelm him. Those

pleasures lasted but a moment; he realises that he has sacrificed his soul and eternity for a fleeting moment of pleasure and intoxication. Alas! life appeared to him too long to be wholly consecrated to God; he dared not too soon espouse the side of virtue, lest he should not be able to fulfil its requirements; he regarded the years that were still before him as an immense space through which he must pass bearing his cross, living in a state of detachment from the world and in the practice of Christian duties. That single thought continually hindered every good desire; and he deferred his return to God to the last stage of his life, as that in which perseverance would be the most certain. How surprised is he in his last hour to find that what appeared to him so long has lasted but a moment; that his infancy and age were so near to each other that they could scarcely be said to form more than a single day; that there was but a single step from his mother's womb to the grave! And he is covered with shame and confusion when he thinks of the sins which will remain against him for ever: the irregularities of his youth, the passions and scandals of more advanced years, (what do I know?) perhaps in addition the shameful disorders of a licentious old age. Ah! in a time of health we only see the surface of our consciences, we retain only a vague and confused remembrance of our life, we only discern those passions that actually lead us into bondage. But on a deathbed the clouds which had been spread over the conscience of the sinner are dispelled; the more closely he examines his heart the more defilement he discovers; the more he dives into this abyss the more his various sins present themselves to his view. All that surrounds his deathbed

revives the remembrance of his many crimes. The domestics whom he has scandalised, the children whom he has neglected, the wife whom he has grieved by other attachments; the priests of the Church whom he has despised; the shameful images of his sinful passions, still portrayed upon the walls of his house; the blessings he has abused; the luxury which still surrounds him, and for which the poor and his creditors have suffered; the sumptuous buildings which he has erected at the expense of the widow and the orphan—everything, heaven and earth (says Job), arise against him and recall to him the history of his sinful passions and crimes. *The heavens shall reveal his iniquity, and the earth shall rise up against him* (Job xx. 27).

Thus the remembrance of the past will constitute the most terrible condition of the dying sinner, because he discovers in that past only sufferings which he has endured in vain, pleasures which lasted but a moment, and sins which will remain for ever.

And all that takes place before his eyes is equally distressing to this miserable creature: the sudden alarms that seize him, the separations to which he is then called, and the changes which then take place.

His *sudden alarms.* He always flattered himself that the Day of the Lord would not take him by surprise. All that he had heard from Christian pulpits on the subject did not prevent his indulging the hope that he should set his conscience in order before that awful moment: but, lo! it arrives while he is still burdened with his crimes and before he has made any preparation for it, or taken a single step to appease the Almighty; lo! it arrives, and he is about

to be judged, before he has even given the matter a serious thought.

His *sudden alarms.* God strikes him in the midst of his criminal excesses, at a time when the thought of death was the farthest from his mind; when he had just gained certain positions which he had till then most eagerly sought; and when, like the fool in the Gospel, he said to his soul: "Take thine ease and enjoy in peace the fruit of thy labour." In that very moment the justice of God surprises him, and in the twinkling of an eye are his life and his hopes extinguished.

His *sudden alarms.* He is on the point of death. God permits that no one should dare to inform him that he must give up all hope of life. His neighbours flatter him; his friends suffer him to deceive himself; they already secretly bewail him as dead, and yet they encourage him with the hope of living; they deceive him, in order that he may deceive himself. The Scripture must be fulfilled; the sinner must be seized unexpectedly by the hand of Death. Thou hast so predicted it, O my God! and Thou art true to Thy word.

His *sudden alarms.* Given up by the physicians, he cannot yet be convinced that he is dying; he still flatters himself with the expectation of recovery and cherishes hope; the justice of God still leaves him a measure of reason, that he may employ it to his own deception. It is clear from his solicitude and uneasiness that he is not yet aware that he is dying; he torments himself and is agitated, as though he could escape from the king of terrors; and his distress arises merely from the fear of losing his life, and not from any grief at having passed it amiss. The blinded sin-

ner must needs remain so, even to the end, that his death may resemble his life.

Finally, his *sudden alarms*. He then perceives that the world has always deceived him; that it has continually led him from illusion to illusion, and from hope to hope; that things never occurred as he had promised himself, and that he has always been the dupe of his own mistakes. He cannot conceive that he should have been so constantly under a delusion; that he should have persisted, during so many years, to sacrifice himself for a world which recompensed him only with empty promises; and that his whole life has been an insane attachment to the world, and a continued indifference on the part of the world to him. But what overpowers him is that the mistake is irremediable; that we can die but *once*, and that, after having run our course, we can no more return to retrace our steps and to pursue a different route. Thou art just, O my God, and Thou wilt have the sinner even now to decide against himself, that Thou mayest condemn him out of his own mouth.

The sudden alarms of the dying sinner are therefore overwhelming. Not less terrible are the *separations* to which he is called in that last moment. The more he is attached to life and worldly enjoyments, the more he feels the separation; the more ties to be broken, the more wounds he opens; and the more he has to part with, the more deaths he has to suffer.

A *separation* from his riches, which he had, with such long and painful solicitude, accumulated, perhaps by methods that rendered his salvation very doubtful; from riches which he had obstinately retained, notwithstanding the accusations of his conscience; from riches which he had callously withheld

from the necessities of his brethren. Yet this wealth escapes from him; this accumulation of riches vanishes like dust before his eyes; he only carries away with him the love of riches, the regret for losing them, and the guilt by which he acquired them.

A *separation* from all the magnificence that surrounds him; from his stately palaces in which he supposed he had built himself an asylum from death; from his sumptuous furniture and elegant apparel, of which there will remain to him but the winding-sheet in which he is about to be enveloped. Everything flies from him, everything forsakes him. He begins to regard himself, as he ought always to have done, as a stranger in the midst of his palaces; as a poor person no longer possessed of anything; as an unhappy being about to be stripped of everything that he possesses, the sight of which he is permitted to enjoy for a time, only to increase his regret and his punishment.

A *separation* from his emoluments and honours, which he is about to relinquish, perhaps to a rival; from honours and dignities which he had acquired by so many cares and base devices, and which he had enjoyed with arrogance. On his deathbed he is stripped of every mark of distinction; and he retains, of all his numerous titles, only that of "sinner," which he then, alas! too late takes to himself. He would be content in that last moment with the meanest state, he would accept the most obscure and lowly condition as a favour, if it might prolong his existence; he envies the fate of his servants whom he leaves behind him; he hastens with rapid strides towards death, and turns his eyes with regret towards life.

A *separation* from his body, for whose gratification he had always lived, and with which, through favouring his sinful passions, he had contracted such lively and intimate bonds. He perceives that his house of clay is tottering; he feels himself dying, each sense gradually fails him; he holds on to life only by a languishing frame, the cruel agonies of disease, and the excessive love that still attaches him to life and becomes stronger as he approaches dissolution.

A *separation* from his friends and neighbours, whom he sees surround his bed, and whose tears and lamentations oppress his heart and make him more painfully feel his leaving them.

A *separation* from the world in which he filled so many offices; in which he has established, exalted, and spread himself, as though it were to be his eternal abode; from the world, in which he was always one of the principal actors, and in the events of which he had taken so great a share. His body is about to leave the world, but all his affections still cling to it; the world dies to him, but he, though dying, dies not to the world.

Finally, a *separation* from every creature. All is disappearing around him; he stretches out his hands to every surrounding object as if to retain it, but he only grasps a phantom, a dissipating vapour, which leaves nothing substantial in his hands. *All the men of riches have found nothing in their hands* (Ps. lxxv. 6). It is then that God alone appears great in the eyes of the dying sinner. It is in that terrible moment that the whole world dissolves and vanishes from before his eyes; nothing remains to him but God, Who fills all things, Who neither passes away nor changes. That sinner formerly complained, with an ironical

and impious tone, that it was difficult to feel any lively regard for a God Who was invisible, and not to be attached to the creatures which we saw and which affected all our senses. Ah! in that last moment he will perceive naught but God; the invisible will become visible; and God will occupy the place of all those illusions that deluded him during his life.

Everything now changes for this unhappy being; and this forms, with his sudden alarms and separations, the last bitter ingredient in the cup of death.

A *change* takes place in his credit and authority. Since the world can no longer expect anything from him, it begins no longer to depend upon him; his pretended friends retire; his creatures begin already to seek other protectors and masters; even his servants are busy in securing a convenient fortune for themselves after his decease; scarcely any remain around him to receive his dying sighs. All leave him, all retire from him; he no longer beholds around him numerous and eager flatterers; they run in crowds to the person already designated to succeed him, while he (says Job), left alone upon his bed of anguish, is no longer surrounded but by the terrors of death; he already enters into the dreadful solitude which is prepared for him in the tomb, and he makes bitter reflections upon the inconstancy of the world and the little reliance that can be placed on men. *He shall be afflicted when left in his tabernacle* (Job xx. 7).

A *change* takes place in the public esteem with which he had been so flattered and intoxicated. Alas! the world which had extolled him so much has already forgotten him. The changes which his death is about to occasion upon the stage will for some

days engage the public attention; but, that short period being elapsed, he will sink into insignificance and oblivion; it will scarcely be recollected that he lived; the public will talk of the wonderful qualities of his successor, whom they will exalt upon the ruins of his reputation and memory. He already perceives that forgetfulness; he realises that he has only to die and the void will soon be filled up and no vestige of him will remain in the world. And the upright alone, who had seen him surrounded with so much glory, will say to themselves: "Where is he? Where are now those flatterers whom his greatness attracted? Behold what the world leads to, and what is gained by serving it!"

A *change* takes place in his body. That flesh which he had so much indulged and idolized, that vain beauty which had attracted so many glances and corrupted so many hearts, is already but a spectacle of horror, the sight of which we can scarcely endure; it is a mere carcass, which we already dread to approach. The unhappy creature who has, alas! awakened so many sinful desires is abandoned. His friends, his neighbours, and even his servants flee from him and conceal themselves; they dare not approach him but with precaution; they peform for him none but acts of decency and necessity. He endures himself with pain, and can regard himself only with horror. I, who formerly attracted every attention (he says), now call to my servants and they refuse to approach me; and even my breath is become infectious and fatal to my children and neighbours (Job xix. 17).

Finally, a *change* takes place in all that surrounds him. His eyes seek something to rest upon, and

they can only discover the mournful images of death.

But the memory of the past and the spectacle of the present are not the worst troubles to the dying sinner; he would not be so completely miserable if he could confine himself to those. It is the thought of the future that convulses him with horror and despair: that *hereafter*, that region of darkness, into which he is about to enter accompanied only by his conscience; that *hereafter*, that unknown land from which no mortal has ever returned; that *hereafter*, that immense abyss, in the contemplation of which his spirit is lost and confounded, and into which he is about to be plunged uncertain of his destiny; that *hereafter*, that tomb, that abode of horror, in which he is about to take his place with the ashes of his ancestors; that *hereafter*, that awful eternity, of which he cannot endure the first glance; that *hereafter*, that dreadful judgment-seat, where he is about to appear before an offended God, to give an account of a life spent wholly in wickedness. Ah! while he saw that terrible futurity only at a distance, he impiously boasted of disbelieving in it; he continually demanded, with a tone of blasphemy and derision, Who has returned from it? He laughed at vulgar fears, he boasted of his firmness and courage. But as soon as he is stricken of God, as death approaches, as the gates of eternity open to his view, and he at length draws near to that terrible hereafter to which he had so often bid defiance: ah! he then becomes weak, he raises his suppliant hands to heaven; or he is melancholy, silent, agitated, revolving in his mind the most terrible and appalling thoughts, and expect-

ing from the Almighty no more consideration for his tears and lamentations than for his fury and despair.

Yes, the miserable creature who lulled himself to sleep in his irregularities, who always flattered himself that one pious moment, one single expression of compunction at the hour of death, would be sufficient to appease the wrath of God, now despairs of His favour. We in vain speak to him of God's everlasting mercy; he feels his own extreme unworthiness. The minister of religion endeavours in vain to remove his fears, by setting before him the Divine clemency; God's promises no longer affect him, because he is aware that the charity of the Church, which never despairs of the salvation of her children, does not alter the formidable sentence of Divine justice. In vain does the priest promise him the pardon of his sins; a secret and terrible voice informs him that there is no salvation for him. The priest in vain exhorts him to have recourse to the last aids of religion; he regards them as but desperate remedies that are hazarded when hope no longer exists and which are administered rather for the consolation of the surviving friends than for the benefit of the dying. Christ's servants are called to support him in his last moments; but he can only secretly envy their condition and detest the misery of his own. They put the words of Scripture and the sentiments of a royal penitent into his mouth; but he is sensible that his heart disavows those sacred expressions, and that the words which arise from an ardent love and a sincere compunction do not suit a sinner surprised like him in the midst of his transgressions. The priest holds before him the image of his dying God; and

that consoling object, so capable of exciting his confidence, secretly reproaches him with his ingratitude and continual abuse of grace. Death rapidly approaches; the priest begins to recite the prayers appointed for the dying. "*Depart, Christian soul, out of this world.*" He does not say to him: "Prince, great one of this world, depart." During his life public monuments were hardly sufficient to express his name and enumerate his pompous titles: in his last moments he is addressed only by the title that he received at his baptism, the only one of which he took no account, and yet the only one which must remain with him for ever. "*Depart, Christian soul.*" Alas! he had lived as though his body constituted the whole of his being and treasure; he had even attempted to persuade himself that his soul was nothing, that man consisted only of flesh and blood, and that everything would perish with him. He is now informed that his body is mere clay about to be dissolved; and that his only immortal being is his soul, that image of God, that intelligence capable of knowing and loving its Creator, which is now about to leave its terrestrial abode and to appear before the awful tribunal. *Depart, Christian soul;* you had looked upon the earth as your country, but it was only the place of your pilgrimage; the Church thought to have announced glad tidings to you, the end of your exile, the termination of your misery, by announcing to you the dissolution of your mortal body, but, alas! she only announces to you sad and alarming intelligence—the beginning of your misery and pains. *Depart, Christian soul,* marked with the seal of salvation, which you have effaced; redeemed by the Blood of Jesus Christ, which you have tramp-

led under your feet; purified by the grace of regeneration, which you have a thousand times defiled; enlightened by revelation, which you have constantly rejected; loaded with the mercies of God, which you have always impiously profaned. *Depart, Christian soul;* go and bear before Jesus Christ that august title which ought to have been the glorious sign of your salvation, and which now only enhances the malice of your crimes.

The dying sinner finds nothing but overwhelming regret in the memory of the past, images of affliction in all that is before his eyes, and dismaying terrors in anticipating the future. He no longer knows whom to have recourse to: not to the creatures, which escape him; nor to the world which is passing away; nor to men, who are incapable of delivering him from death; nor to the just God, Whom he regards as an avowed enemy, and from Whom he has no indulgence to expect. Then horror takes hold upon him; he torments himself, he agitates himself, in order to fly from death which grasps him, or at least to fly from himself. There glares from his expiring eyes an indescribable gloom and ferocity, which mocks the agony of his soul. In anguish he utters words, interrupted by sobbing, which are unintelligible, and to which it is uncertain whether repentance or despair gives rise. He casts affrighted looks towards the figure of his Crucified God, which leave it doubtful whether they are expressive of fear or of hope, of hatred or of love. He falls into sudden convulsions, which give no indication whether they are occasioned by the dissolution of the body or by the soul's perception of its approaching Judge. He utters dismal

groans, and we know not whether they are forced from him by the remembrance of his past crimes or by his grief at leaving the present life. At length, amid all these painful struggles, his eyes become fixed, his countenance alters, his face becomes distorted, his livid lips convulsively separate, his whole frame quivers; and by this last struggle his unhappy soul is reluctantly disengaged from this body of clay, falls into the hands of God, and finds itself alone at the foot of the awful tribunal.

XX

THE DEATH OF THE RIGHTEOUS MAN

By Massillon

Death always possesses something terrible even to the most upright of men. So inscrutable are the judgments of God, and so impenetrable the secrets of futurity, that it is not in the power of man to look forward to them with a steady and tranquil eye. But the terrors that are felt by the sinner are very different from those that are experienced by the just man. The sinner is agitated by the recollection of the past, by the view of the present, and by the prospect of the future: the faithful soul receives the greatest consolation from those very sources.

Represent to yourselves a just man on his deathbed, who has for a long time been preparing for that last moment, who has, by the practice of Christian duties, been laying up a treasure of righteousness that he may not appear empty before his Judge, and who has lived a life of faith that he might die in peace and in the consolation of hope. Represent to yourselves such a person at length arrived at that last hour, which he had continually kept in view, and to which he constantly referred all his cares, his privations, his mortifications, and the events of his mortal existence.

Nothing is more consoling to him than the remem-

brance of the past, his sufferings, his mortifications, his self-denials. To suffer for God now seems terrible to us. But when death approaches, the most consoling thought to a believer is the remembrance of the sufferings he has endured for God. He then comprehends the merits of penance; he realises that he has sacrificed only momentary pleasures which would have left him only confusion and shame; that, of all worldly joys and pleasures, on a deathbed nothing more remains to the sinner who continually enjoyed them than to the righteous soul who refrained from them, while the one will bear eternally the guilt of having given himself up to them, and the other the glory of having been able to subdue his inclination to them. To a believer on a deathbed the past presents privations and afflictions which were of short duration and for which he is about to be consoled for ever: the time of danger and temptation is now passed; the attacks the world made on his faith are at length terminated; his perpetual conflicts with his passions are come to an end; the obstacles flesh and blood continually opposed to his piety are finally removed. When we enter the haven, how sweet it is to recollect the storms and tempests through which we have been preserved! When brought off victors from the course, how we delight to retrace our steps and to review the labours, obstacles, and difficulties that rendered our race memorable!

Not but that the memory of the past, by bringing to the dying saint's recollection the trials and perils of his past life, recalls to his mind his shortcomings and falls. But they are falls which have been expiated by the tears of penance; happy falls, on account of the renewed fervour and faithfulness by

which they were always succeeded; falls which remind him of the Divine mercy that caused his sins and passions to promote his repentance and conversion. Ah! the sorrow he feels for his faults in that last moment is a consoling and soothing sorrow; the tears which the memory of his sins draws from him are but tears of joy and gratitude. God's former mercies to him inspire him with confidence, and encourage him to expect new ones; all God's past dealings with him serve to strengthen him, and seem a guarantee for the future. No longer, as in the days of his mourning and repentance, does he consider God in the character of a terrible Judge Whom he has insulted and Whose wrath it was necessary to appease; he now regards Him as the Father of mercy, the God of all comfort, Who is about to receive him to His bosom, and to console him after his sorrows.

"Arise, faithful soul," says its Lord and God to it in secret; "you who have drunk all the bitterness of My cup, forget at last your past tears and afflictions; the period of your sufferings and grief is at length ended. Divest thyself, then, O daughter of Jerusalem, of thy sombre garments with which thou hast hitherto been clothed; cast off the sad spoils of thy mortality, and put on thy new apparel of glory; enter into the joys of thy Lord. Break at last the chains of thy captivity; depart out of the midst of Babylon, in which thou hast so long groaned in exile." Yes, the first source of consolation to a righteous man on his deathbed is the remembrance of the past.

But, secondly, everything that now comes before his eyes—the world which passes away, the creatures

which disappear, the vain phantoms which vanish; all these, in their transiency, afford additional consolations to him. The sudden alarms, the separations, the changes, which constitute the despair of the dying sinner, are precisely the very things that console an upright man in that last moment. Nothing surprises him; he is separated from nothing that he values; nothing changes in his view.

Nothing surprises him. Ah! the day of the Lord does not alarm him; he expected and desired it. The thought of that last hour entered into all his actions and projects, regulated all his desires, and encouraged him in all his conduct. Every hour, every moment, appeared to him as the one in which the righteous Judge was about to require that strict account in which even our very righteousness will be examined. It is in this manner that he lived in continual preparation for that last hour: it is thus that he dies tranquil, consoled, free from sudden alarm, without fear, and in peace with God; perceiving death no nearer than it had always appeared to him; dying no more than he has died daily, and finding nothing different between the day of his death and the ordinary days of his mortal existence.

Besides, that which occasions the sudden alarms and despair of the dying sinner is the perception that the world in which he had confided is nothing, a mere dream which vanishes and escapes from him. But the believer, in that last moment, beholds the world with the same eyes with which he has always beheld it; he regards it as a passing shadow, as a meteor which at a distance deceives but which, when viewed near, possesses nothing real or substantial. He derives a sacred joy from having always rightly judged

the world; from not having been attached to that which would escape from him in a moment, and from having placed his trust only in God Who eternally exists to recompense all who hope in Him. How sweet it is to a faithful Christian at such a time to be able to say to himself: "I have chosen the better part; I had reason to attach myself to God, since He alone was to be left to me. My choice was considered a folly; the world derided me, and thought me singular and whimsical in not conforming to it. This last moment is a complete reply to the world's judgment. It is death which decides who were wise and who were foolish, and whether the man of the world, or the Christian believer, had reason on his side."

It is thus that a righteous man on a deathbed contemplates the world and all its glory. And when the priests of the Church come to converse with him concerning God and the nothingness of all human things, those sacred truths, so new to sinners in their last agony, are familiar to him. The minister of Christ does not address to him a new and strange language; it is the language of his heart, it expresses the sentiments he held during life. Nothing so much consoles and cheers him then as to listen to discourses about God Whom he always loved, about the eternal blessings which he always desired, about the vanity of the world which he always despised. Great God! what light, what peace, what happy transports, what sacred emotions of love and joy and confidence and thanksgiving then arise in the believer's mind! His faith is stimulated; his love is inflamed; his fervour is increased; his confidence is excited. As the outward man decays, the inward man is perfected. As

his house of clay fails, his soul is elevated and purified. As his body languishes, his spirit becomes free and is renewed, like a pure and brilliant flame which ascends and becomes brighter as it disengages itself from the remains of matter that retained it and as the substance to which it was attached is consumed and dissipated.

Nothing surprises him on his deathbed; nor is he separated from anything that is dear to him or that he regrets. For, what can death take from him which should occasion him tears or regret? The world? No; he always lived as a stranger in it; he found in it only offences which wounded his faith, snares which endangered his virtue, conventions which wearied him, and obligations which in spite of himself divided his heart between Heaven and earth; he regrets not the loss of that world which he never loved. From his property and riches? No; his treasure was in Heaven; his wealth had been devoted to the poor, he is only going to recover it in the bosom of God. From his titles and dignities? No; they are a yoke which he shakes off; the only title that was dear to him was that which he received at the baptismal font, which he must bear before God, and which gives him a claim to eternal blessings. From his neighbours and friends? No; he knows that he precedes them but a moment, that death does not separate those whom love united upon earth, and that they shall soon be reunited in the bosom of God to form with him but one Church and society. From his children? He leaves them God as their Father, his example and instructions as their inheritance, his prayers and blessings as the last consolation. From his body? Yes; from that body which he has con-

tinually chastised and crucified, and which has subjected him to so many humiliating exigencies; from that house of clay which kept his soul in captivity, which prolonged the days of his exile and servitude, and hindered his reunion with Jesus Christ. Ah! like St Paul, he desires to be dissolved. His body is a foreign garment from which he is now being disencumbered; it is a wall of separation from his God which is crumbling, leaving him free to take his flight towards the everlasting mountains. In truth, death separates him from nothing, because faith had already detached him from everything.

I do not add that the changes which take place during one's last illness, and which are so terrible to the sinner, make no alteration in the faithful soul. His reason is extinguished, it is true; but he had for a long time subjected it to the yoke of faith and extinguished his vain knowledge by the knowledge of Divine truth. His dying eyes become obscured, and are closed to every visible object; but he had for a long time looked only upon those objects that were invisible. His tongue cleaves to the roof of his mouth; but he had long since set a watch over it, and meditated in silence on the mercies of the God of his fathers. All his faculties become dull, and lose their natural use; but he had long since forbidden their sinful indulgence; and (in a different sense from that of what is said of vain idols) he had eyes, but saw not; ears, but heard not; a nose, and smelt not; and a tongue which tasted only heavenly things. Finally, the traits of a vain beauty fade away; but his beauty has for long been altogether within, for he was wholly occupied in adorning his soul with the gifts of grace and virtue.

Such a person, therefore, experiences no change at death. His body decays; every creature vanishes; the light recedes; his composite nature is dissolved: and in the midst of all these changes he alone experiences none, he alone continues the same. How great does faith make the believer on his deathbed! How worthy of God, of angels, and of men, is the sight of a righteous man in his last moments! It is then that the believing Christian appears superior to the world and to every creature. It is then that such a soul, partaking of the greatness and immutability of the God to Whom it is about to be united, is elevated above everything of earth: it is in the world without taking part in it; in a mortal body, without being attached to it; in the midst of neighbours and friends, without either seeing or knowing them; amidst the tears and laments of relatives, without hearing them; in the midst of the confusion caused by its departure, without its tranquillity being in the least disturbed. *He is free among the dead* (Ps. lxxxvii. 6). He is already immovable in the bosom of God, amid the destruction of all things. Ah! how beautiful it is to behold the upright man walk with a tranquil and majestic step towards eternity! And with what reason had the wicked prophet, when he beheld the triumphant march and the confident songs of Israel, to exclaim: *Let my soul die the death of the just, and let my last end be like to theirs!* (Num. xxiii. 10).

And, finally, the thought of the future fills the just man with joy and consolation. The sinner, while in health, looked upon eternity with a tranquil eye; but on the approach of death his tranquillity is con-

verted into terror and amazement. The just man, on the contrary, during the days of his mortal life dared not regard with a steady eye the depths of the Divine judgments; he worked out his salvation with fear and trembling; he shuddered at the thought of that dreadful futurity wherein even the righteous, if judged without mercy, shall hardly be saved: but when he comes to lie on his deathbed, ah! the God of peace manifests Himself to him and calms his agitations; his fears subside, and are changed into a sweet hope. With his dying eyes he already pierces through that cloud of mortality which still surrounds him; and he, like Stephen, sees the Throne of Glory and the Son of Man seated at the right hand of His Father and ready to receive him; he sees that immortal country after which he had so ardently sighed and upon which his mind had always dwelt, that holy Sion which the God of his fathers fills with His glory and presence, where He satisfies His elect with the river of delights and makes them taste the inconceivable blessings prepared for those that love Him.

Ah! also when the priest comes at last to inform such a person that his hour is come and that eternity approaches; when the priest announces to him, in the name of the Church: "*Depart, Christian soul;* leave at last the earth where you have so long been a stranger and a captive; the time of trial and tribulation is ended. Behold the Just Judge, Who comes to strike off the chains of your mortality. Return to the bosom of God from Whom you came; leave this world which was not worthy of you. *Depart, Christian soul;* the Lord has at last been moved by your tears; He comes to open to you the gate of eternity,

the way of the saints. *Depart, Christian soul;* go and unite with the Church in Heaven which awaits your coming; but forget not your brethren whom you leave still exposed to temptations and trials on earth. Be touched by the sad state of the Church here below, which begot you in Jesus Christ, and which envies your departure; plead for her, that the days of her sorrows may be shortened and her children all become duteous to their Heavenly Father. *Depart, Christian soul;* we lose you upon earth, only that we may find you again with Jesus in the Kingdom of His saints; the body which you are about to leave a prey to worms and corruption shall soon follow you immortal and glorious; not a hair of your head shall perish; there shall remain in your ashes a seed of immortality, even till the day of revelation, when your dry bones shall be reanimated and again appear more resplendent than light. What a happiness it is for you to leave at last a place where everything wearies and troubles us, where we are a burden to ourselves and only make ourselves miserable; and to go to an abode of peace, of joy, of serenity, there to enjoy the sweetness of the contemplation of thy God for ever! *Depart, Christian soul.*"

What blessed tidings of joy and immortality to this righteous soul! What a happy announcement! With what peace, confidence, and thanksgiving does he accept it! Like the aged Simeon, he raises his dying eyes to heaven, and seeming to behold his Jesus coming to receive him, he says to Him: "Break, O my God, when Thou pleasest, these remains of mortality, these feeble bonds that still keep me here; I await, in peace and hope, the fulfilment of Thy eternal promises." Thus, purified by the

expiations of a holy and Christian life, fortified by the last rites of the Church, washed in the Blood of the Lamb, comforted by the secret unction of the Holy Spirit Who dwells in him, ripe for eternity, with a holy joy he closes his eyes to every earthly object, he falls asleep in the Lord, and returns into the bosom of God from Whom he came.

XXI

UPLIFTING OF THE SOUL

By Bossuet

The Existence of God.

From all eternity God is; God is perfect; God is happy; God is one. The ungodly ask, Wherefore should God be? I answer, Why should God not be? Is it because He is perfect? is perfection an obstacle to being? What extravagance of error! On the contrary, perfection is the very principle and argument of being. Wherefore should the imperfect be, and the perfect not be? In other words, why should that exist which partakes most of nothingness, and that which has none of it not be? What do we understand by a perfect being? One in which is no deficiency. What by an imperfect being? One in which there is defect. Why should not the being in which there is nothing wanting exist, rather than the being in which there is deficiency? Whence comes it that any thing is, and that what is nothing cannot make itself exist, but because being is more excellent that the negation of being, and the thing that has no being cannot prevail over that which has being, nor prevent it from being? But, by the same reasoning, the imperfect cannot prevail over the perfect, nor have being in preference to it, nor hinder it from being. Why, then, should the mad dogma which *the fool saith in his heart* (Ps. xiii. 1) shut out God's absolute existence?

In this strange blindness we wander darkling. The

ungodly man denies the being of God, and cares not to inquire the meaning of his own existence. My soul,—reasoning but feebly reasoning soul,—whence and by what strain of argument dost thou infer, while satisfied of thine own existence, that God is not? Alas! art thou better than God? Soul, feeble, ignorant, wandering, full of error and uncertainty, full of weakness of will, corrupt and prone to evil, on what ground of argument and fair inference are we to believe that thou art, and that certainty, perfect intelligence, full comprehension of truth, and immutable love of holiness and rectitude cannot be?*

God's Love for the Just.

God is to us a father, a mother, a nurse. *Can a woman forget her child whom she has borne in her womb? and if she should forget, yet I will not forget thee* (Isa. xlix. 15), says the Lord. *The Lord thy God hath carried thee in His arms as a little child* (Deut. i. 31). As the eagle enticing her young to fly and hovering over them, so He spreads His wings and takes you and carries you. He guards you as the apple of His eye (Deut. xxxii. 10-11). He not only feeds and nourishes, but He at the same time soothes and caresses you, as a tender mother feeds and caresses her little child. This is His Divine promise, continually fulfilled to us: *As one whom the mother caresseth, so will I comfort you* (Isa. lxvi. 13).

More than all that, He is a passionate lover, a tender husband to the faithful soul. The language which the Prophet Ezechiel tells us was addressed by Almighty God to Jerusalem is, in truth, addressed to us. The Prophet represents the soul of man under the figure of a miserable child, abandoned at the moment of its birth, cared for by none, an object of contempt and loathing to every

* We have omitted Bossuet's Cartesian teaching on the origin and priority of our idea of the infinite, as his teaching on that point does not commend itself to Catholic philosophers.

passer-by, as it lies grovelling in the dust, disfigured and defiled by the stain of original sin. Upon this poor little outcast, on whom no one takes pity and whom death claims for its own, the Lord looks with His divine compassion and says: *Live; sin-stained and loathsome as thou art, I will wash thee and make thee clean, robing thee in a garment whiter than snow* (Ezech. xvi). So it is indeed that Almighty God speaks to every soul washed in the waters of Baptism.

But His tender cares do not stop there. The Prophet tells us that the child thus rescued and made clean and fair grows up into a maiden, ready to be adorned with all the graces of youth, but encompassed at the same time with all the temptations from without and from within which beset the soul as it approaches maturity. Then the Lord speaks again, reminding that soul of what He has already done for her. *I bid thee live*, He says; *I have made thee pure and lovely; I have betrothed thee to Myself, none other shall possess thee, no earthly desires shall enthrall thee. I have anointed thee with holy oil, the abundance of My graces; I have clothed thee in fine linen, which is the justification of the saints* (Apoc. xix.); thou art Mine to all eternity.

My love goes farther. It is not enough that thou shouldst be fair and pure, robed in thy bridal whiteness; I will have thee also rich and splendid, adorned with jewels of price. *I have put My bracelets upon thine arms, and a chain about thy neck; and I have put a jewel on thy forehead, and ear-rings in thine ears, and a beautiful crown upon thy head* (Ezech. xvi.). I have nourished thee with the most delicious food, containing in itself all sweetness. The whole world is dazzled by thy beauty, by that beauty which I alone have bestowed upon thee—I the Lord God, Who am in Myself all beauty and all goodness and the author of all beauty and goodness in My creatures.

See, Christian soul, what a Lover, what a Bridegroom

is yours! He found you hideous and repulsive, He has made you fair and lovely; He is continually adding new charms to your beauty; He lavishes all His gifts, all His wealth upon you; He has placed you on His throne, He has made you a queen. All ranks of His holy angels pay court to you as the bride of the King of kings, the sharer in His eternal joy. O Christian soul, thus decked with His glory, thus satiated with immortal pleasures, is there anything wanting to fill up the measure of your Bridegroom's goodness and love? *

God's Love for Penitent Sinners.

If a husband leaves his wife, and she, being thus forsaken, marries another man, we say by common consent that her first husband would assuredly never take her back again, polluted and dishonoured creature as she would be (Jer. iii. 1). Well, sinful soul, you are, if possible, in still worse case. You have given yourself up to all your lovers. It is not I Who have left you; no, I am a faithful Spouse; it is you, faithless soul, who have abandoned Me, and followed not one lover only but a thousand seducers: *nevertheless return to Me*, saith the Lord, *and I will receive you* (Jer. iii. 1). You have indeed done evil and boasted of it; the very stones in the streets, the very trees of the forest, proclaim your shame; yet still return to Me, at least from now say to Me: *Thou art my Father, my Spouse, and the Guide of my virginity.* Every idle pleasure has deceived you and

* The French historian Michelet and others are very onesided in their criticisms of the employment of erotic imagery to describe the love between the human soul and God. There is, of course, Biblical warrant for such symbolism; and in making use of it Bossuet only followed the example of St. Bernard, than whom (to quote an eminent Nonconformist writer, the Rev. Professor David Smith) "none ever loved Jesus more passionately or worshipped Him more reverently." Cf. St. Bernard, *On the Love of God*, edited by E. G. Gardner, Litt.D., pp. 14-21; also Evelyn Underhill, *Mysticism*, pt. i., chap. vi., ii.

led you farther and farther astray. Yet still there is time; return to Me and be converted.

Return, prodigal son, to your Father's house. There the robe of your innocence will be restored to you; there a banquet will be spread to celebrate your return, there the whole household will rejoice; there your Father, moved by a special tenderness towards you, will say to the just who have never left Him, in the language of one Who almost excuses His conduct: *You are always with Me; but I must rejoice because your brother was dead and is alive again, he was lost and is found. Rejoice with Me, and with all the angels in Heaven, whose joy is greater over one sinner doing penance than over ninety-nine just who need not penance* (Luke xv.).

Yes, this appeal to the sinner is the continual, the ever-renewed cry of the Father to His disobedient children, of the Heavenly Bridegroom to His faithless spouse. Be converted, do penance; put far from you your sins of deceit and disobedience; be of a new heart and a new spirit. Why will you die, when I Whom you have offended would have you live? Return, return to Me, saith the Lord God. It is I, even I, Who blot out your iniquities for My own sake, and I will not remember your sins. Return, return to Me, sinners, for I have redeemed you. I will blot out like a cloud your iniquities; I will scatter to the four winds your sins, as the sun disperses the mist.

God's Love Despised and Implacable.

Because thou didst not serve the Lord thy God with joy and gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things, thou shalt serve thine enemy, whom the Lord will send upon thee, in hunger and thirst and nakedness and in want of all things, and He shall put upon thy neck an iron yoke till He consume thee (Deut. xxviii. 47). *And as the Lord rejoiced upon you before, doing good to you*

and multiplying you; so He shall rejoice destroying you and bringing you to nought (Deut. xxviii. 63). Ponder and weigh those words. Love despised will be the measure of your torments.

Of what avail are all these cries and lamentations? these frantic struggles to loosen the hold which is crushing you? *Your wound is incurable; there is no ointment to cleanse and heal it, for I have wounded you with the wound of an enemy* (Jer. xxx. 12), with a cruel chastisement, not to correct you, but to satisfy an inexorable justice. *Your sins are hardened;* that is because you have persevered in doing evil. And I too, saith the Lord, am hardened towards you; I will forget that I am a Father.

God the Son.

Why should God not have a son? Why should this blessed nature be wanting in that perfect fruitfulness which It bestows on all Its creatures? Is the name of father so degrading and so unworthy of the Supreme Being that it cannot in its natural sense belong to Him? *Shall not I, Who make others to bring forth children, Myself bring forth?* (Isa. lxvi. 9). And if it is an admirable thing to make for oneself children by adoption, is it not still more admirable to beget them?

I know well that an immortal nature has no need, like our frail mortal nature, to renew and perpetuate itself by substituting, as we do, children to fill our place in the world when we must quit it. But, independently of this necessary substitution, is there not in itself something admirable in producing another self out of one's own abundance, out of one's plenitude, by the effect of an inexhaustible power of communication, by the fecundity and wealth of a happy and perfect nature?

It is by participation in this happy fecundity that man is fruitful. Had he remained immortal according to the original plan of his creation, we are always given to

understand that it would also then have been for him an admirable thing to be fruitful, to beget of one's self and of one's own substance another self. And in that state of original justice and purity, human fecundity would have been regarded as rich and perfect; and whence would that perfection have come, save from that of God Who is always fertile in Himself and always a Father?

God the Father has no need to associate Himself with any other than Himself in order to be fruitful and a Father; He does not produce this other self from outside of Himself, for nothing that is outside of God is God. God, then, conceives in Himself; He carries in Himself His fruit, which is co-eternal with Himself. Although He is only a father, and the name of mother which is attached to a self-imperfect and degenerate sex does not belong to Him, yet He has nevertheless as maternal a bosom in which He bears His Son. He says: *From the womb, before the day-star, have I begotten Thee* (Ps. cix. 3). And the Son calls Himself *the only-begotten Son Who is in the bosom of the Father* (John i. 18),—a description solely appertaining to the Son of God. For what son is there, save only this Divine Son, who is always in the bosom of his father and never leaves it? This Divine Son's conception is not a thing apart from His birth; the fruit which the Father bears is perfect as soon as it is conceived, and never leaves the womb which bears it. He Who is carried in a limitless womb is at once vast and immense as that place of His conception, and can never quit it. God begets Him, God receives Him into His bosom, God conceives Him, God bears Him, God gives birth to Him; and the Eternal Wisdom, Who is none other than the Son of God, speaks (Prov. viii. 24) of His own conception and His own birth as one and the same thing.

God will never have any Son but this; for this Son is perfect, and God could not have two such. In so perfect a nature, one single, one only act of bringing forth, of

giving birth, exhausts all its fruitfulness, and attracts all its love. That is why the Son of God calls Himself *the only-begotten Son* (John i. 18); thereby He at the same time shows us that He is a Son, not by grace and adoption, but by nature. And the Father, confirming from on high this declaration of the Son, spoke these words from Heaven: *This is My beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased;* this is My Son, I have none but Him; and to Him from all eternity I have given, and to Him for ever I will give, all My love.

The Son is God.

Can a God come forth from a God? Can a God share the being of any other than Himself? Yes, if that God is a Son. It is repugnant to a God to come forth from another, as from a creator drawing Him out of nothingness; but it is not repugnant to a God to come forth from another, as from a Father Who begets Him of His own Divine substance. The more perfect a son is, or (if we may so speak) the more a son is a son, the more is he of the same substance as his father, the more he is one with him; and if he could be of the same nature and of the same individual substance, the more would he be a perfect son. But what nature could be rich enough, infinite enough, immense enough for that, excepting only that which alone is absolutely infinite and limitless, the Divine nature? Thus it has been revealed to us that God is a Father, that God is a Son, and that the Father and the Son are one only God, because the Son begotten of the substance of His Father, Who can suffer no division and can have no parts, can be nothing less than one God and one and the same God with His Father; for he who says the substance of God, says all of that substance, and consequently says God in His entirety.

He Who proceeds from God in this manner, that is to say, from His whole substance, possesses at the same

time His eternity whole and entire; in the words of the Prophet, *His going forth is from the beginning, from the days of eternity* (Mich. v. 2), because eternity is of the substance of God, and whoever has come forth from God and from His substance, comes forth from there of necessity with the same eternity, the same life, the same majesty. For if an ordinary father transmits to his son all his nobility, how much more does not the eternal Father communicate to His Son all His nobility together with all the perfection and the eternity of His being? Thus of necessity the Son of God is co-eternal with His Father, for there cannot possibly be anything new or temporal in the bosom of God. Time and change, which essentially belong to nature, never draw near to that august bosom, and the very plenitude of being, the very perfection which excludes from it nothingness, also excludes from it all of changing nature. In God all is permanent, all is immutable, nothing in His being passes away, nothing new enters into it; what He is at one moment (if indeed we may speak of a moment in such connection with God), that He is always.

In the beginning was the Word (John i. 1). Go back to the creation of the world, *the Word was*. Go back still further if you can, and put as many years as you please in endless succession, *He was*. Like God, He is *He Who is*. St. John says in the Apocalypse: *Grace be unto you, and peace from Him that is, and that was, and that is to come* (Apoc. i. 4). This is God. And a little later it is Jesus Christ of Whom St. John says: *Behold, He cometh in the clouds* (Apoc. i. 7). And it is our Lord Who, speaking by the lips of the Apostle, says: *I am alpha and omega, the beginning and the end, saith the Lord God, Who is, and Who is to come* (Apoc. i. 8). Jesus Christ, then, is like His eternal Father; Jesus it is *Who is and Who was;* He it is Whose immensity embraces the beginning and the end of all things; and, as the Son, and being of the same nature and substance

as His Father, He is also of the same being, of the same duration, of the same eternity.

Images, in inanimate nature, of the Divine Generation.

See this delicate vapour which the ocean, softly touched by the sun and as it were impregnated with its heat, sends up day and night as of itself towards heaven, but without any diminution, any exhaustion of the mighty flood which fills the bosom of the deep. Nevertheless this vapour is the purest part of the ocean's substance, and shares something of its nature, although it is not of the same material as the waters which the vast ocean reserves for itself. Thus, says Solomon, *Wisdom is a vapour of the power of God and a certain emanation of the glory of the almighty God* (Wis. vii. 25).

Consider the brilliancy, the splendour, the dazzling effulgence of the light which is the production and, as it were, the offspring of the sun. It comes forth from the great luminary, in a soft yet burning ray, without ever diminishing the brightness of its glorious parent, without separating itself from him, without waiting for the progress of time. Instantly, as soon as the sun was formed, its splendour was born with it, and with it shed itself abroad so that the whole perfect beauty of the magnificent orb could be seen at once. Thus, says Solomon, did Wisdom come forth from the bosom of God as *a delicate vapour, a most pure emanation of His power, the vivid reflection, the splendour of His eternal light* (Wis. vii. 25) : or, in the words of St. Paul, the Son is *the brightness of the glory of God, and the figure of His substance* (Heb. i. 3). As soon as the light is, it shines forth; if the brightness and splendour of the sun are not eternal, it is because the light of the sun is itself not eternal; and, by contrary reasoning, if the light were eternal, its brightness and splendour would be so also. Now, God

is a light in which there is no darkness, an uncreated Light, which therefore exists of itself and by itself eternally, which knows neither rising nor setting. Thus its bright effulgence, which is the only-begotten Son, is eternal as the Light itself, and is never separated from its substance. All the rays of the sun form an integral part of the great luminary, its brightness and splendour never detach themselves from it. Thus too the Son of God, without ever detaching Himself from His Father, comes forth from Him eternally; and to put God upon His throne without His Son would be to put the orb of day in the heavens without one single beam of light, without one ray of its glorious life-giving splendour

But let us pass on to consider the other expression used by St. Paul. *The Son of God*, says the Apostle, *is the figure and impress of the substance of His Father* (Heb. i. 3). When a seal is pressed down upon wax, the wax, without detaching anything from the seal that imprints itself upon it, draws forth from the seal its whole and exact resemblance, and so incorporates itself with that resemblance that the wax and that which the seal represented can never again be separated from each other. Look well at the impression; not a line, not a tracery is wanting, and yet all remains exactly the same in the seal under the pressure of which the wax took its form. Thus has the Son of God taken all from the Father, yet without depriving Him of anything. He is the perfect image of the Father, the *imprint*, the entire expression, not of His form, for God has none; but, as St. Paul tells us, *of His substance*, or, according to the full force of the original text, *of His person*. He bears all the features of His eternal Father; that is why He says: *He that seeth Me, seeth the Father also* (John xiv. 9), and elsewhere: *As the Father hath life in Himself, even so also He has given to the Son to have life in Himself. As the Father raiseth up the dead and giveth life, so also the Son giveth life to whom He will* (John v.). And He does not express

His Father in the effects of His power only, He expresses Him also in all ways, in all His nature and personal characteristics; so that if it were possible to see the Son without at the same time seeing the Father, one would in His Son see the Father whole and entire.

But who can explain what are those traits and characteristics of the eternal Father which shine forth so transcendently in His adorable Son? They are not of this life, and all that we can say of them is, that, there being nothing accidental in God, all these characteristics of the Father which the Son bears impressed upon His own person, belong to the substance or to the person of the Father. The Son is this substantial impression which the Father produces out of all that He is; it is by effecting this impression that He begets His Son.

The Wise Man clothes this truth in far more subtle and delicate imagery. Wisdom, conceived from all eternity in the bosom of God, is, he says, *the unspotted mirror of His majesty, and the image of His goodness* (Wis. vii. 26). It is too coarse and common a thing, that impression of a seal, to take as a type or figure of the eternal Son of God. So too is it if for the same purpose we take the production of a likeness in marble or on canvas by the sculptor's or the painter's art. These similes are too mean for our transcendent subject. Nature, however, offers us something more delicate, better suited to our purpose. Here in the clear waters of a fountain or on the smooth surface of a mirror we find a new secret of painting a likeness and reproducing an image. Nothing has to be done, except to present an object to this wonder-worker; instantly the object depicts itself; and this admirable picture is inferior in no one part to the original, nay, it is in a manner the original itself. And yet nothing wastes, or is taken away, either from the original or from the polished surface on which it has reflected itself so entirely. And to complete the portrait neither the help of time nor of an imperfect

sketch is needed; one and the same moment begins and finishes it; and both the design and the perfecting are but the work of a single stroke.

Image, in the rational creature, of the Divine Generation.

But all those things are dead. The sun, its rays, its heat; a seal, its impression; a picture, carved or painted; a mirror, and the reflections produced on it by objects: all those are dead things. God has made a more vivid image of His pure and eternal generation; and that it might be the better known to us, it is in ourselves that He has formed it.

He made it when He said, *Let Us make man* (Gen. i. 26). He desired then to make something in which should be declared the operation of His Son, of another self, since He said, *Let* us *make*. He desired to make something which should be living, intelligent, holy, happy as Himself; otherwise we should not know the meaning of these words: *Let Us make man to Our image and likeness. To Our image*, in the depth of his nature; *to Our likeness*, by the conformity of his operations to Our eternal and indivisible operation.

It is as the effect of these words, *Let Us make man to Our image*, that man thinks; and to think is to conceive: every thought is the conception and expression of something: every thought is the expression and therefore a conception of him who thinks, if he who thinks thinks of himself and understands himself; and this conception and expression would be perfect, eternal, substantial, if the thinker were perfect, eternal, and if he were by his nature all substance, without having anything accidental in himself, nor anything which could be superadded to his pure and unchangeable substance.

God, then, Who thinks substantially, perfectly, eternally, and Who thinks and can think only of Himself,

in thinking knows something substantial, perfect, and eternal as Himself; this is His giving birth, His eternal and perfect generation. For the Divine nature has in it nothing of imperfection, and in it conception cannot be separated from parturition. Thus it is, then, that God is a Father; thus it is that He gives birth to a Son Who is equal to Him; this is that eternal and perfect fruitfulness, the excellence of which fills us with awe and admiration as soon as, under the guidance of faith, we have ventured to bring our thoughts to dwell upon so Divine a mystery.

We can, then, now answer the question of Solomon: *Tell us His name and the name of His Son, if thou knowest it* (Prov. xxx. 4). We do know it, now that God has taught us it. His name is *The Word* (John i. 1), not *a word*, not a strange and accidental word; God knows nothing of such; but a Word which is in itself a person, subsistent, co-operative, concreative, *preparing and arranging all these things with Him*, as Solomon says (Prov. viii. 27-31); a person Who has no beginning, since *He is God* (John i. 1-2), and God is essentially one; a person Who is nevertheless distinct from God, since He is in God, with God, dwelling with God, *apud Deum*, His only-begotten Son *Who is in the bosom of the Father* (John i. 18), Whom He sends forth into the world, Whom He makes manifest in the flesh as the only Son of God. This is His name, *the Word*, the Word by which an eternal and perfect God Himself tells Himself all that He is, and conceives and begets and brings forth what He tells Himself; brings forth therefore a perfect, a co-eternal, a co-essential and consubstantial one.

The Holy Ghost.

God, then, is fruitful; God has a Son. But where, then, is the Holy Ghost? and where is that holy and perfect Trinity Whom we serve from the moment of our

Baptism? Does not God love this Son? and is not He Himself loved by this Son? This love is neither imperfect nor accidental in God, the love of God is as substantial as His thought; and the Holy Ghost Who proceeds from the Father and the Son, as their mutual love, is of the same substance as the Father and the Son, a third consubstantial Person, and forming with Them one and the same God.

But why, then, is He not a Son, seeing that by reason of His production He is of the same nature? God has not revealed that to us. He has indeed said that the Son is *only-begotten* (John i. 18), for He is perfect, and whatever is perfect is unique; thus the Son of God, the perfect Son of a perfect Father, must be only-begotten, and if there could have been two Sons the generation of the Son would be imperfect. All then that comes after Him will cease to be a Son and will not come by generation, although of the same nature. What, then, will this final production of God be? It is a procession without any special name: the Holy Ghost *proceeds from the Father* (John xv. 26): the Holy Ghost is the Spirit of both the Father and the Son: the Holy Ghost *receives of the Son* (John xv. 14): and the Son *sends Him* (John xvi. 7), as does the Father. Be silent, human reasoning; God has condescended to explain to us that the procession of His Word was a real and perfect generation; what the procession of His Holy Spirit was He has not condescended to tell us, nor that there could ever be anything in nature capable of representing an action at once so substantial and so marvellous. That is a secret reserved for the Beatific Vision.

O God the Holy Ghost! Thou art not the Son, since Thou art the eternal and subsistent love of the Father and the Son; Thou as a necessary consequence supposest the Son to be begotten, and begotten as an only Son, because He is perfect. Thou too art perfect, and unique in Thy kind and order: Thou art not foreign to the

Father or to the Son, since Thou art Their love and Their eternal union. Thou dost of necessity proceed from both the Father and the Son, since Thou art Their mutual love; whoever would separate Thee from Them would separate Them from each other and would divide Their eternal reign.

Thou art equal to the Father and to the Son, since we are consecrated equally *in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost* (Matt. xxviii. 19), and since Thou hast with Them one and the same temple which is our soul, our body (1 Cor. iii. 16-17; vi. 19), all that we are. Nothing that is unequal, nothing that is foreign to the Father and to the Son, must be named with Them as on an equality: I will not be baptized and consecrated in the name of a fellow-servant, I will not be the temple of a creature; it would be idolatry to build a temple to a creature, and, still more, to be and to believe myself his temple.

The created trinity an image of the Uncreated Trinity.

Let us return again to ourselves. We are, we know, we will. In the first place, as to our understanding and our willing. If these are something, they are not absolutely the same thing; if they were not something, they would be nothing, and there would be neither cognition nor volition; but if they were absolutely the same thing, we should not distinguish one from the other; yet we do so distinguish them; for we know what we do not will, what we do not love, although we cannot love or will what we do not apprehend. God Himself knows and understands what He does not love, as (for instance) sin; and, in our own case, how many things do we not know which we hate, and which we are not willing either to do or to suffer, because we perceive that they would harm us? We understand what it is to throw ourselves

down from the top of a high tower, we understand this action as well as we understand any other; but we nevertheless do not will it, because it would be injurious to us.

We are, then, something intelligent, something which understands itself and loves itself; something which only loves what it apprehends, but which can know and understand what it does not love: yet, while not loving it, we understand that we do not love it: and we even will to know it, and do not will to love it, because we know or believe that it is harmful to us; but, on the contrary, we will not to love it. Thus, to know and to love are distinct things, but inseparable inasmuch as there is no knowledge whatever without some amount of volition. And if man, like the angels, knew all that he is, his knowledge would be equal to his being; and, his love of himself being in proportion to his knowledge, his love would be equal to both his knowledge and his being. And if all this were well regulated, it would, in its union, make one and the same happiness of the same soul, and in fact would make the same soul happy, because, by the unswerving directness of its will in conformity to the truth of its knowledge, that soul would be righteous. Thus these three things well regulated—being, cognition, and love—make one single soul happy and just, which soul could not exist without being known, nor be known without being loved; nor could it alienate from itself any one of these things without losing itself entirely and with all its happiness. For, what would it be for a soul to exist without knowing itself? and what would it be to know itself without loving itself, in that manner in which it must love itself in order to be truly happy, that is to say, without loving itself in and through God, Who is the one and only foundation of all our happiness?

Thus, in our imperfect and defective way we represent an incomprehensible mystery. A created trinity, formed

by God in our souls, represents to us the Uncreated Trinity which He alone could reveal to us; and in order to make us represent this mystery the better, He has mingled in our souls, which represent it, something of an incomprehensible nature.

We have seen that to understand and to will, to know and to love, are very distinct acts; but are they so distinct as to be entirely and substantially different things? That cannot be; intellection is nothing else than the substance of the soul affected in a certain manner, and volition is nothing else than the substance of the soul affected in another manner. When I change either in thought or in volition, can I entertain this thought or elicit this volition without my substance taking part in the change? Undoubtedly not. All this change is, in reality, nothing but that my substance is affected, diversified, modified in different ways, yet fundamentally remaining always the same. For in changing my thoughts I do not change my substance; that remains one and the same while my thoughts come and go and while my will goes on distinguishing itself from my soul, from which it is continually issuing. My intellect also in the same way goes on detaching itself from my being, from which it issues again and again. And while both my intellect and my will are thus separating themselves in so many various ways and attaching themselves to so many different objects, my substance is always the same in reality, since it enters wholly and entirely into all these so widely different states of being.*

The soul's beatitude an image of God's Beatitude.

When God made me to His own image and likeness, He made me to be happy like Himself, as far as it is possible for a creature so to be; and that is why He makes me find in myself these three things: myself who

* Cf. Michael Maher, S.J., *Psychology*, 6th edition, pp. 36-39.

am made to be happy, the idea of my happiness, and the love or the desire for this happiness,—three things which I find inseparable in myself, since I cannot be, and never am, without being a thing made to be happy and consequently containing in itself both the idea of its own happiness and the desire to enjoy it, which desire proceeds of necessity from that idea.

If I were asked which of these things I would the soonest lose, I should not know how to answer, For, in the first place, I do not wish to lose my being; still less do I wish to lose my happiness, since without happiness it would be better for me never to have been, as our Divine Lord said of His most unhappy disciple: *It would have been better for that man if he had never been born* (Matt. xxvi. 24). I do not therefore wish to lose my happiness any more than my being, nor to lose the idea and the love of my happiness any more than my happiness itself, since there is no happiness without this idea and this love.

If there is anything in me which has always been an actual part of myself, it is the inclination to seek happiness; for I can never, since I came into existence, have ceased to avoid what would harm me, or to seek what would be to my advantage. In our very infancy the aptitude or disposition to pursue happiness begins to manifest itself; and since we bring it with us on our entrance into the world, we must have had it, though more latently, in our mother's womb.*

To the confused idea which we have of happiness let us add the clear and distinct knowledge of the object in which true and perfect happiness consists, and at the same time let us change our confused desire for happiness into the actual possession of what constitutes happiness.

But in what can my happiness consist except in the

* In this paragraph we have slightly deviated from the terminology of the original, in order more absolutely to exclude the Cartesian theory of innate ideas.

most perfect thing I can know, if I can possess it? The most perfect thing that I know is God. It remains to ascertain whether I can possess Him. But to possess Him—what is that but to know Him? Is it not in knowing Himself that He possesses Himself? I am, then, capable of possessing Him, since I am capable of knowing Him; provided that in knowing Him I bring myself to love Him, for to know Him without loving Him is, in effect, not to know Him.

I know God (I admit) but very imperfectly; hence my love for Him is too feeble. I have, then, to desire to know God more adequately than I do; *to know Him even as I am known* (1 Cor. xiii. 12), to know Him unveiled, to see Him *face to face*, without shadow, without obscurity. May God grant me this; may He say to me, as to Moses: *I will show to you all good* (Exod. xxxiii. 19). But that is not of this life. When that happiness shall be come to us, we shall have nothing more to desire in the way of knowledge; but what about love? When we shall see God immediately, face to face, can we do otherwise than love Him, and love Him perfectly and everlastingly, with a love springing from a perfect knowledge of Him? Assuredly not. Then indeed we shall be reduced to perfect unity and simplicity. And in that simplicity we shall bear the perfect image of the Trinity, since God, united to our being, will produce in us the Beatific Vision, which will in a sense be God Himself, He being its object as well as its cause; and by this Beatific Vision He will produce in us an everlasting and insatiable love, which too, in a certain sense, will be nothing else than God Himself seen and possessed by us: *God will be all in all* (1 Cor. xv. 28).

Then shall be accomplished our perfect unity in ourselves, and with everything that with us will possess God. And what will make us all perfectly one is that we shall be and shall know and shall love; and all this shall be one and the same life in us all. And then shall

be fulfilled the words of the Redeemer : *As Thou, Father, in Me, and I in Thee, so shall they all be one in Us* (John xxvii. 21); one in themselves, and one with all the members of the body of the Church which they compose.

Let us here below form in us the Blessed Trinity, by being united to God, by knowing God, and by loving God. And since our knowledge, which at present is imperfect and obscure, will pass away, and since love is the only thing in us that will remain and be never lost, let us love, love, love.

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